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Commissioner Dr. Cassellius announces Education Department Executive Team

Commissioner Dr. Brenda Cassellius appoints four members to her executive team

(Roseville, MN) – Education Commissioner Dr. Brenda Cassellius appointed four members with extensive educational and legislative experience to her executive team.

Commissioner Cassellius appointed 35-year MDE veteran Jessie Montañó Deputy Commissioner; Charlene Briner Communications Director; Brian Shekleton Government Relations Director, and Karen Klinzing temporarily as Acting Assistant Commissioner.

Montañó has 35 years of service to the Department of Education serving as Acting Commissioner of Education and Assistant Commissioner in January 2003. Prior to serving in those roles, she was the Director of the Consolidated Federal Programs for eight years. She began her career as coordinator of migrant child recruitment. She was promoted to a supervisory role a year later and has served in a variety of other supervisory roles throughout her career.

"I welcome these outstanding individuals to my newly developing team," said Commissioner Cassellius. "I am confident Jessie Montañó's experience will provide services to students in the schools and meet the governor's agenda of making sure every student is prepared to succeed."

Communications Director Charlene Briner brings with her ten years experience in communications, media, public affairs and crisis communications. Most recently, she served in Communications at the Minnesota State Legislature for nearly five years. In addition, she has background in legislative and school district communications and freelance writing.

Government Relations Director Brian Shekleton brings a decade of diverse experience in legislative, county, local and government relations. Most recently he served as a Committee Administrator for the Minnesota House of Representatives. Shekleton developed skills in relationship building and communications while working for the Minnesota House of Representatives, Hennepin County Commissioner Peter McLaughlin, and the University of Minnesota's Academic Health Center.

Commissioner Cassellius appointed Karen Klinzing temporarily as Acting Assistant Commissioner. Klinzing has served for the past four years as Assistant Commissioner and for six months as the Deputy Commissioner.

"Charlene Briner's legislative and school district experience will provide valuable counsel to the executive team and Brian Shekleton's diverse local, county and legislative experience adds valuable legislative leadership," Commissioner Cassellius said. "I was also impressed with the leadership displayed by Karen Klinzing in developing the transition plan under a compressed timeline."

