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## **Commissioner Seagren Approves Flexible Learning Year for Southwestern Minnesota Schools**

*Consortium of districts seek to improve student achievement through common calendar*

Roseville, MN – Commissioner of Education Alice Seagren approved the applications of 25 school districts in southwestern Minnesota for a flexible learning year beginning with the 2010-11 school year. The schools joined together in their application and will share a common school calendar that also involves the Minnesota State College and University (MNSCU) schools in their region.

The Department of Education approved the proposal with the requirement that the districts submit an annual report detailing how the calendar modification, professional learning communities and other inter-district enhancements lead to increases in teacher effectiveness and meaningful gains in student achievement. The flexible learning year program is approved for three school years and will be reviewed annually.

“This new school calendar will facilitate greater inter-district collaboration in southwestern Minnesota and should strengthen teacher effectiveness and play a critical role in increasing student performance,” said Commissioner Seagren. “The common calendar will allow these small districts to pool resources and join together for teacher professional development opportunities with each other and with their MNSCU partners in the region.”

The Department also required the districts to provide at least as many annual instructional hours in the 2010-2011 school year as were scheduled for the 2009-2010 school year.

Districts that apply to the commissioner for a flexible learning year program must first negotiate the changes with their teachers and communicate with parents and members of the community through at least three public hearings.

The schools involved in the flexible learning year program are: Canby, Brewster, Adrian, Westbrook, Worthington, Windom, Tracy, Springfield, Sleepy Eye, RTR, Round Lake, Redwood Area, Mountain Lake, Milroy, Minneota, Marshall, Luverne, Lynd, Lakeview, Jackson County, Ivanhoe, Hills-Beaver Creek, Hendricks, Edgerton and Comfrey.

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