



MDE Weekly Superintendent Mail

TO: Superintendents
FROM: Dr. Brenda Cassellius, Commissioner
DATE: November 17, 2011

MDE NEWS AND INFORMATION

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- ***Commissioner's Dialogue with Superintendents***

Thanks to all of you who participated in yesterday's conference call with Commissioner Cassellius. Assessment Director Jennifer Dugan provided an overview of the 2011-2012 assessment schedule and information about the transition to new online assessments, and provided answers to your questions. The Commissioner gave an update on the No Child Left Behind waiver application and ESEA Flexibility Request. As always, please contact Commissioner Cassellius if you have any questions or comments. The next conference call is scheduled for **Wednesday, December 21**. Call-in instructions will be sent to you prior to the conference call.

- ***New Website Coming Soon!***

In early December, the Minnesota Department of Education will launch a new website. We believe the new site will provide our customers—teachers, parents, superintendents and stakeholders—with accurate, easy-to-find information on a wealth of education topics.

This website was created with our audience in mind. We have sections where teachers can find classroom and licensing resources; another where school and district staff can submit data or download forms, and a section on student success that contains a variety of information about education programs and more. A section on "Educator Excellence" will provide teachers with dozens of resources from licensing information to professional development opportunities. Another new feature is our "Just for Parents" section, full of friendly language and helpful resources to assist parents, grandparents and guardians in making great decisions for our kids. You'll also find a "Data Downloads" page with quick and easy access to every report submission you use.

We are particularly excited about our new Data Center. Containing all of the information now included on the School Report Cards, there is so much more to be found. Here, you'll be able to look at data in a whole new way to get a clear picture of how our students and schools are really doing. At its very essence, the Data Center is a centralized location for users to access files, reports and map. It has expanded capabilities beyond the past data download section of the old website. Users can search by topic, subject, year or type. Teachers and other users can generate dynamic reports when possible from a list of questions, and find easy to understand spreadsheets for information that is static in nature.

At MDE, we're acutely aware of school and district needs for additional reports to support instruction and student achievement. We're also aware that not every school or district has a designated data coach to create and interpret data files and reports. So in addition to the information you'll find when the website is rolled out in

December, MDE is developing new reports to better meet your needs. As new reports are developed, they will be placed in the Data Center for all schools and districts to access.

As always, MDE staff will be available to answer your questions and assist you in navigating our new site. We look forward to your feedback.

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Note: Due to the Thanksgiving holiday and the website transition, the next mailing is scheduled to be sent on Thursday, December 1st.

NEWS RELEASES

- ***Study Supports Focus on High-Quality Early Childhood Education***

Newly released results of the 2010 Minnesota School Readiness Study show children from disadvantaged backgrounds are less likely to be school ready upon entering kindergarten. According to the report, 59 percent of children arrive at kindergarten proficient in language and literacy, 52 percent are proficient in mathematical thinking and 56 percent show readiness in social and emotional development.

“We know that one of the biggest predictors of academic success in children – especially economically disadvantaged young children and children of color – is their level of readiness when they enter kindergarten,” said Education Commissioner Brenda Cassellius. “That’s why Governor Dayton has put such a strong emphasis on investing in our youngest learners in his 7-Point Plan, and why it is imperative to continue to focus on our goals to make high-quality early education experiences available to every Minnesota child.” [Read November 17 news release.](#)

- ***Minnesota Submits No Child Left Behind Waiver Application***

Setting the stage for a better accountability model for schools, Education Commissioner Brenda Cassellius and Minnesota Department of Education officials submitted an application for a waiver from the federal No Child Left Behind law today. Calling Minnesota’s application for a new accountability plan “a model that makes sense,” Cassellius said the waiver application reflects the strong appetite for meaningful accountability by educators, parents and the public.

“Today marks an important step forward in our state’s efforts to provide a world-class education to every student,” said Commissioner Cassellius. “We firmly believe our waiver application represents a bold and creative accountability plan that better and more appropriately fits Minnesota’s needs.” [Read the November 14 news release.](#) [View the waiver application.](#) [View Minnesota ESEA Flexibility Request.](#) [View the Flexibility Request Summary.](#)

ACTION ITEMS

- ***Q Comp Program Review Process***

Please see the [memorandum](#) from Steve Dibb, director of School Support, regarding the above-mentioned matter. Included are a recording of the networking meeting held on November 7, the program review timeline, resources, and Facilitator and Site Review Team member training videos.

For assistance with questions regarding this process, or if individuals need to be added to the Q Comp listserv, please contact mde.q-comp@state.mn.us.

- ***Levy Limitation and Certification Report and Instructions***

The Levy Limitation and Certification Report and instructions are normally sent out about this time every year for school district use in certifying final levies in December. We are behind in our administrative processes this year and will not be able to rerun and post reports this week. We hope to have the information available to you before Thanksgiving. We apologize for any inconvenience this might cause. This message has been sent to district business managers.

For assistance with questions, please contact Terri Yetter, Education Funding supervisor, Division of School Finance, at terri.yetter@state.mn.us.

MISCELLANEOUS

- ***2012 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Essay/Spoken-Word/Poster Contest***

Please see the letter and submission entry information from Contest Chair Cheryl Chatman, and 2012 MLK Event Coordinator Yvonne Wells-Ellis on the [2012 MLK Event website](#). The contest is available to students in grades 3 through 12.

For more information or assistance with questions, contact Cheryl Chatman (Chatman@csp.edu, 651-603-6151) or Yvonne Wells-Ellis (ywellsellis01@hamline.edu, 651-642-0811).

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