

LEARNING MATTERS

Learning Matters highlights the most important issues coming out of the Minnesota Department of Education including press releases, policy announcements, grant and scholarship opportunities and other items of interest.

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PRESS RELEASES

- ***Governor Dayton Proclaims December 5-9 Inclusive Schools Week***

Educators recognize that each child is unique, learns differently, and, therefore, learns better if teaching is tailored to their abilities and interests. In continuing with Minnesota's commitment to ensuring that all schools and classrooms are welcoming and capable of educating all Minnesota children, Governor Dayton has proclaimed December 5-9 Inclusive Schools Week. [Read the December 7 press release.](#)

- ***Commissioner Cassellius Announces Series of Statewide Meetings***

The Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) announced a series of statewide public meetings to provide information about Minnesota's No Child Left Behind (NCLB) waiver request. Commissioner Cassellius and Department staff will embark on a statewide tour to present information about Minnesota's waiver request and plans for a new accountability system that will more accurately and fairly measure schools' progress. [Read the December 6 press release.](#)

- ***Teacher Evaluation Working Group Appointed***

Education Commissioner Brenda Cassellius has appointed 35 members to a panel charged with developing a new evaluation system for Minnesota teachers. [Read the December 5 press release.](#)

- ***Additional Charter School Authorizer Approved by Minnesota Department of Education***

Twenty-six charter school authorizers now meet the nationally recognized rigorous state law that brings increased oversight to charter schools. [Read the December 2 press release.](#)

- ***Minnesota Department of Education Launches New Website***

The Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) launched a new website today designed to provide educators, parents, and the public with an intuitive, easy-to-navigate tool to learn about Minnesota public schools. [Read the December 1 news release.](#)

- ***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. [Read the 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. [Read the November 14 news release.](#) [View the waiver application.](#) [View Minnesota ESEA Flexibility Request.](#) [View the Flexibility Request Summary.](#)

MISCELLANEOUS

- **2012 National STEM Video Game Challenge**

Inspired by the Educate to Innovate Campaign, President Obama's initiative to promote a renewed focus on Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) education, the [National STEM Video Game Challenge](#) is a multi-year competition, with the goal to motivate interest in STEM learning among America's youth by tapping into students' natural passion for playing and making video games. The National STEM Video Game Challenge was launched in partnership with Digital Promise, a new initiative created by President Obama and Congress, supported through the U.S. Department of Education. The initiative is designed to unlock the promise of breakthrough technologies to transform teaching and learning.

The contest is open to students and game designers in four levels: middle school, high school, college and graduate students, and educators. Entrants have until March 12, 2012, to submit their ideas and games.

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

[See the letter of invitation from Cheryl Chatman](#), contest chair. [Please visit the event website for further information including the contest entry form.](#) The submission deadline has been extended. Entries must be postmarked **December 21 or earlier.**

For more information or clarification, please contact Cheryl Chatman (chatman@csp.edu, 651/603-6151), or Essay/Spoken-Word/Poster Contest Chair, or Yvonne Wells-Ellis, Coordinator of the MLK Event (ywellsellis01@hamline.edu, or at the Council on Black Minnesotans' office line at 651/642-0811).

- **Civil War Sesquicentennial Commemoration Task Force Logo Design – Deadline December 30, 2011**

The Civil War Commemoration Task Force invites Minnesotans to participate in a logo contest and develop an icon to be used in commemorating the war's 150th anniversary. Logo designs must depict both Minnesota and the Civil War. The deadline for submission is 5 p.m., **December 30**. A task force subcommittee will review the submitted logos and announce a winner on Jan. 10. The contest is open to all ages. Logo contest entries must be submitted electronically in a PDF format and e-mailed to civilwartaskforcelogo@mnhs.org. [For more information, visit the Secretary of State's website.](#)

- **ED Review – A U.S. Department of Education Newsletter**

ED Review provides a bi-weekly update on U.S. Department of Education activities relevant to the Intergovernmental and Corporate community and other stakeholders. [See the latest posting.](#)

Learning Matters is produced by the Communications Office at the [Minnesota Department of Education](#). If you have questions about the information contained in this newsletter, please contact: mde.contactus@state.mn.us.