

# LEARNING MATTERS

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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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- **Minnesota One of First States Granted Federal Waiver!**

Education Commissioner Brenda Cassellius joined President Obama and Education Secretary Arne Duncan in Washington on February 9th for the announcement that Minnesota will receive a waiver from the requirements of the federal No Child Left Behind law. As a result, Minnesota will begin using a new accountability system based on multiple measures of reliable data to identify schools for recognition, accountability and support. The new system will provide a clearer focus on schools most in need of intensive intervention strategies and support, and will move the state forward in the goals of closing achievement gaps and improving educational outcomes for all students. [Read the February 9 press release.](#) [Visit Waiver Working Group page.](#)

- **Launch of Minnesota's Adopt-A-School Initiative**

Governor Dayton and Commissioner Cassellius launched the Adopt-a-School initiative Tuesday at South Education Center in Richfield. The Adopt-A-School initiative seeks to encourage businesses to step up and help support local schools and provide learning opportunities for students. Resources and a tool kit are available to help potential partnerships get started. [Read February 14 news release.](#) [Visit Adopt-A-School website.](#)

- **Recommendations Released for New Principal Evaluation System**

When it comes to evaluating principals, Minnesota teachers say that parents, students, staff and the community need to have a voice in the discussion. This idea is one of 10 key recommendations offered by teachers according to a new report released by the Dayton Administration, Education Minnesota and The VIVA Minnesota Teachers' Project. [Read the February 22 press release.](#) [Read the report: 360 Degree Leadership.](#)

- **QWERTY is our Name and ROBOTICS is our Game!**

Detroit Lakes High School's [QWERTY Robotics](#) (FIRST Team 3278) presented at the Minnesota School Boards' Association Leadership Conference Show and Tell on January 12, 2012. Students demonstrated their 2011 FIRST Robotics Minnesota State Regional winning robot and presented concepts and material they have learned in robotics to school members, superintendents, business vendors, and teachers from across the state of Minnesota. QWERTY Robotics is currently in their third build season preparing for the 2012 FIRST Robotics competition to be held this spring at the University of Minnesota.

FIRST is a not-for-profit organization devoted to helping young people discover and develop a passion for Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM). (FIRST is an acronym meaning: For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology.) The QWERTY Robotics team strives to spread FIRST's message by promoting STEM education within their local community and emphasizing the importance of science and technology in our world today.

As the team's motto states, "It's Not Just About the Robot!" Students learn "Gracious Professionalism," teamwork, computer programming, CAD design, mechanical building, electrical wiring, web design, leadership, time management, public speaking and safety. Participating students are eligible for among \$14 million in FIRST college scholarships.

- **February is I Love to Read Month**

Governor Mark Dayton and Department of Education Commissioner Brenda Cassellius visited Carver Elementary School in Maplewood on February 1st to kick off national "I Love to Read" Month. [Visit the Reading Well by Third Grade Web page](#) for resources and information available for Minnesota schools to use as tools in developing comprehensive literacy programs and practices that lead to increased student achievement at all levels. Stay tuned for more information about literacy events that the Minnesota Department of Education will be announcing within the next few weeks.

- **Second Annual Minnesota Bullying Prevention Summit – March 5, 2012**

The second annual Minnesota Bullying Prevention Summit will be held Monday, March 5, 2012, at the University of Minnesota's McNamara Center, Minneapolis — sponsored by the Minnesota Principals Associations and the Hazelden Foundation!

Topics for the day-long conference include implementing a bullying prevention program district-wide, bullying and students with disabilities, bullying and homophobia, formative discipline for bullying interventions, suicide prevention, and teen dating violence intervention. [Register online](#).

- **Minnesota eLearning Summit – July 25-26, 2012**

Put the Minnesota eLearning Summit on your calendar! This annual event offers a terrific gathering place for educators, innovators, and workplace developers for effective learning and use of technology in the Upper Midwest!

The Summit is a collaborative event sponsored by the MN Learning Commons, University of Minnesota, Minnesota State Colleges and Universities, eFolioWorld, CENTSS, and Avenet

Web Solutions. This year's theme, "Convergence is Key," aims to bring together ideas, issues and resource solutions to share what's working to reach 21st century learners.

Workshop proposals are now being accepted and will be reviewed for their influence in the areas of eFolio, eLearning, eServices, and eTools and Resources.

Summit dates are **July 25 and 26**. Host site: Northwestern College; St. Paul, MN.

Registration for the 2012 Summit will be opened soon. [For more information, visit the Minnesota Learning Commons website.](#)

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

ED Review provides a bi-weekly update on U.S. Department of Education initiatives and activities. [See the latest posting.](#)