



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: February 26, 2014

CONTACT: Josh Collins, 651-582-8205, josh.collins@state.mn.us

Commissioner Cassellius Highlights Impact of Early Learning Scholarships in Winona

Parents urged to apply for remaining scholarships

ROSEVILLE – Today, Minnesota Education Commissioner Brenda Cassellius was in Winona to visit the Community KIDS Preschool program. Governor Mark Dayton and the Legislature invested \$40 million in early learning scholarships during the 2013 legislative session to expand access to high-quality early learning for low-income families. For Mower, Olmsted, Rice and Winona counties, more than \$3 million was made available through pre-k scholarships over the biennium, giving more than 600 children access to early learning.

Commissioner Cassellius observed classes at the Community KIDS Preschool and met with Jessie Palubicki, whose son, Conor, is one of 10 students enrolled in the program thanks to an early learning scholarship. This 4 Star Parent Aware rated program is part of Winona Public Schools, and gives students high-quality early learning opportunities to prepare them for kindergarten.

"It is incredible to see so many students benefitting from this critical investment," Commissioner Cassellius said. "These students are being given a great start and will enter kindergarten with all the tools they need to succeed."

High-quality early childhood education is the foundation of all children's success in school and helps to reduce achievement gaps. It also generates a significant return on investment; studies have shown that for every dollar we spend on early childhood education, we save up to \$16 by reducing spending on things like remedial education, special education and grade repetition. There are also added benefits to society; children who get a high-quality start in school go on to earn higher incomes and be more productive adults.

To date, more than 75 percent of available early learning scholarships have been distributed across the state. In Mower, Olmsted, Rice and Winona counties, approximately 70 scholarships are still available.

To see if your child is eligible for an early learning scholarship, contact your local school district or regional scholarship administrator, Child Care Resource and Referral, at 1-888-450-2773. To locate a Parent Aware rated program in your area, [visit the Parent Aware website](#). For more information on MDE's early learning scholarship program on the Minnesota Department of Education website, visit <http://education.state.mn.us> and select Early Learning under the Just for Parents section.

