

## MDE Weekly Superintendent Mail

**TO:** Superintendents  
**FROM:** Dr. Brenda Cassellius, Commissioner  
**DATE:** November 10, 2011

### MDE NEWS AND INFORMATION

#### ANNOUNCEMENTS

- ***NCLB Waiver Request***

The Minnesota Department of Education is developing a waiver request from the federal No Child Left Behind law (NCLB) that will be submitted to the U.S. Department of Education. A stakeholder group has been convened to provide feedback to MDE on the issues surrounding the federal guidelines for a waiver. For news, information and updates on the status of the Department's waiver request, [visit Minnesota's NCLB Waiver Request Web Page](#).

The final stakeholders' meeting took place Friday, November 4, at the Department of Education. See the documents posted from that meeting:

- o [November 4 – Waiver Workgroup Meeting Summary](#)
- o [Measures and Ratings – Defined](#)
- o [Minnesota Accountability at a Glance](#)

There are no more scheduled meetings of the NCLB Waiver Workgroup at this time.

[See the November 4th presentation by Sam Kramer, NCLB state program administrator, given at the monthly meeting of the Association of Metropolitan School Districts regarding Minnesota's NCLB waiver request.](#)

- ***Commissioner's Dialogue with Superintendents – November 16, 2011***

You are invited to participate in next week's conference call scheduled for Wednesday, November 16, 9:30-10:30 a.m. Assessment Director Jennifer Dugan will join the Commissioner to give an overview of the transition to the new online assessments. You will receive call-in instructions in a separate mailing.

#### NEWS RELEASES

- ***Governor Dayton Proclaims November 14-18 College Application Week***

To acknowledge and highlight the importance of high school students being prepared to apply to colleges, Governor Dayton has proclaimed the week of November 14 -18, 2011, as College Application Week.

In order for Minnesota to continue to be a leader in education and economic development, experts and business leaders agree on the need to significantly increase the number of students pursuing and completing a certificate program, associate's degree, or a bachelor's degree.

"Nothing is more important to Minnesota's economic future or quality of life than making sure we create and sustain a highly educated workforce," said Education Commissioner Brenda Cassellius. "I can't think of a better goal than that of having every high school student take the first step toward a brighter future by applying to college." [Read November 10 news release.](#)

- ***Members Appointed to Integration Revenue Task Force***

A 12-member panel charged with evaluating the use of state integration aid for K-12 schools was announced by Minnesota Education Commissioner Brenda Cassellius Tuesday. A product of the final education bill passed during the 2011 special session, the task force is charged with developing recommendations to the Legislature regarding the current integration revenue program.

The 12-member panel was named through the open appointments process outlined in state statute. Commissioner Cassellius named six of the members and the House and Senate each named three.

"Given the challenges facing our state—from our changing statewide demographics, to the dubious distinction of having one of the worst achievement gaps in the nation, to the continued economic pressures facing our schools—this task force has been given a daunting and difficult charge," said Commissioner Cassellius. [Read November 8 news release.](#)

## ACTION ITEM

- ***Facilities Age and Square Footage Report (ED-02051-13) – Response required by December 29, 2011***  
See the attached memorandum from Tom Melcher, director of Program Finance, regarding the above-mentioned matter. School districts are required to annually review the district's inventory of buildings and the vital information pertaining to each building. For assistance with questions, contact Michael Oxborough at 651-582-8509 or [Michael.oxborough@state.mn.us](mailto:Michael.oxborough@state.mn.us).

## MISCELLANEOUS

- ***November 6-12 is Gifted and Talented Youth Week!***  
Governor Dayton has proclaimed November 6-12, 2011, to be Gifted and Talented Youth Week. In addition to recognizing the unique potential of gifted and talented youth, it is also an excellent opportunity to laud the efforts of the parents, educators, counselors and psychologists with whom they work.

Their sustained efforts, coupled with the organized advocacy of the Minnesota Council for Gifted and Talented (MCGT) and the Minnesota Educators of Gifted and Talented (MEGT), help make our state one in which gifted learners are honored and valued. [View the November 7 press release and proclamation.](#)

- ***Early Graduation Achievement Scholarship and Early Graduation Military Service Award Programs***  
Please see the attached memorandum from Jessica Espinosa, Center for Postsecondary Success, regarding new legislation passed under Minnesota Statutes, sections 120B.08 and 120B.09, which allows an early graduate to request an Early Graduation Achievement Scholarship or Early Graduation Military Service Award.

For assistance with program questions, contact Jessica Espinosa at 651-582-8512 or [jessica.espinosa@state.mn.us](mailto:jessica.espinosa@state.mn.us). For assistance with MARSS questions, contact Sharon Peck at 651-582-8811 or [sharon.peck@state.mn.us](mailto:sharon.peck@state.mn.us).

- ***Summary of Radon Testing in Schools Survey***

The Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) Indoor Air Unit conducted a radon testing survey of all Minnesota public schools, including charter schools, in the spring of 2011. The survey was returned from 226 districts encompassing 838 buildings (43.3% of buildings in the state). Read the attached summary.

Questions about this survey or radon testing can be directed to Dan Tranter (651-201-4618 or [daniel.tranter@state.mn.us](mailto:daniel.tranter@state.mn.us)).

###



## MEMORANDUM

**Response Required by December 29, 2011**

**To:** Superintendent of Schools

**From:** Tom Melcher, Director  
Division of Program Finance

**Date:** November 10, 2011

**Subject:** Facilities Age and Square Footage Report (ED-02051-13)  
**Charter schools and cooperatives are not required to complete this report.**

School districts are required to annually review the district's inventory of buildings and the vital information pertaining to each building.

The information reported to the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) is used in calculating the operating capital portion of general education revenue under Minnesota Statutes, section 126C.10, in calculating a portion of health and safety revenue under Minnesota Statutes, section 123B.57, in calculating the deferred maintenance revenue under Minnesota Statutes, section 123B.591 for qualifying districts, and other miscellaneous uses such as review and comment.

The 2012 Age and Square Footage Report also plays an important role in the February State Forecast, as the data provided by the district is used to establish appropriations required to fund state aid for operating capital, health and safety, and deferred maintenance. For this reason, districts are requested to submit any changes or corrections to this report no later than December 29, 2011.

Currently, you can access the inventory of buildings on the MDE website at: <http://education.state.mn.us/HealthAndSafety/Facilities.do> or by going to the agency's main [website](#) by selecting Data > Data Submissions from the drop down menu, then scrolling down to the Facilities Age and Square Footage Report. On December 1, 2011, a redesigned agency website will be launched. The home page address will remain the same. You can find the inventory on the new site under School Support > Data Submissions.

All reporting for buildings owned or being acquired by the district shall be completed on the MDE website no later than December 29, 2011. Access the system using the same four digit district number and password as used for the Health and Safety website. Districts may adjust ages and square footage (without commas) as necessary, and answer questions regarding mechanical ventilation and other district specific information. **Please verify the accuracy of each individual building record by checking the reviewed box whether there are changes or not.**

New buildings occupied as of January 1, 2012 that are not included on the inventory need to be added. Buildings no longer owned by the district need to be deleted, and buildings with change of usage need to be revised. The website does not have capacity to add or delete buildings, so you must contact Michael Oxborough [michael.oxborough@state.mn.us](mailto:michael.oxborough@state.mn.us) to report current building information that is not included on the district's building inventory.

Please note at the bottom of the building summary list is a space to input the total square footage for district-wide administration. This is not required for the December 29, 2011 report, but you may update if you choose. In addition, the "Update, Show Projects" button for each individual building is not required to be reported. This facility project list is not currently utilized at MDE; however, districts are encouraged to use this feature for internal facilities maintenance planning.

If you have questions or require additional information, please contact Michael Oxborough at 651-582-8509, or by e-mail at [michael.oxborough@state.mn.us](mailto:michael.oxborough@state.mn.us).

Technical note: If you have difficulty entering years or amounts, position the cursor in the left side of the field and omit extra spacing using the DELETE key. Do not use commas with numerical entries.



TO: Superintendents, High School Administrators

FROM: Jessica Espinosa, Dual Enrollment Specialist  
Center for Postsecondary Success

DATE: November 9, 2011

**SUBJECT: EARLY GRADUATION ACHIEVEMENT SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM and EARLY GRADUATION MILITARY SERVICE AWARD PROGRAM**

New legislation passed under Minnesota Statutes, sections 120B.08 and 120B.09, allow an early graduate to request an Early Graduation Achievement Scholarship or Early Graduation Military Service Award. These are financial awards provided by the state to eligible students. During the 2011-2012 school year:

- Students who graduate one semester, two quarters, or two trimesters early are eligible for \$2,500.
- Students who graduate two semesters, four quarters, or three trimesters early are eligible for \$5,000.
- Students who graduate three or more semesters, six or more quarters, or five or more trimesters early are eligible for \$7,500.

The Achievement Scholarship must be used for postsecondary instruction. The Military Service Award is unrestricted.

An early graduate is defined as a public school student who graduates before his or her peers beginning in ninth grade and is not participating in PSEO. Students who have participated in the optional portion of state approved learning year program, e.g., ALC, may still be eligible; however, each year the student participates in the optional portion of a learning year is considered an additional quarter of enrollment. For example, a student who participates in the summer term of an ALC or other state-approved learning year program would need to graduate at least three quarters early to be eligible for a scholarship or military award because the summer term would count as one quarter of enrollment. These students have accelerated their opportunity to graduate by participating in these optional programs.

Please note that as specified in statute, the enrolling school is not eligible to claim general education revenue for students who participate in either the Early Graduation

Achievement Scholarship or the Military Service Award program after their date of graduation.

Program Questions: Jessica Espinosa at 651-582-8512 or [Jessica.espinosa@state.mn.us](mailto:Jessica.espinosa@state.mn.us)

MARSS Questions: Sharon Peck at 651-582-8811 or [Sharon.peck@state.mn.us](mailto:Sharon.peck@state.mn.us)



## Summary of Radon Testing in Schools Survey

The Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) Indoor Air Unit conducted a radon testing survey of all Minnesota public schools, including charter schools, in the spring of 2011. The survey was returned from 226 districts encompassing 838 buildings (43.3% of buildings in the state).

Radon testing was conducted in 642 buildings (76.6%). There were 102 buildings (15.9% of the tested buildings) in which one or more rooms tested greater than or equal to 4 picocuries per Liter (pCi/L). A total of 184 rooms, or 1.5% of the tested rooms, had initial radon test results  $\geq 4$  pCi/L (the US EPA action level for radon). Of these rooms, follow-up testing found  $<4$  pCi/L in 47 rooms, meaning radon mitigation was warranted in a total of 137 rooms. Radon mitigation was completed in 44 rooms.

Radon concentrations in Minnesota schools appear to be low, compared to homes and other studies of schools. Public health efforts to test and mitigate radon should continue to focus on homes, but considering the health risks of radon and the number of occupants in schools, testing should also occur in schools. Radon testing in schools can have additional beneficial outcomes, such as encouraging testing in the homes of parents and staff, identifying inadequate ventilation in certain rooms, and measuring the performance of HVAC equipment. MDH is planning to contact schools that had unmitigated rooms and re-surveying non-respondent schools.

Many schools did not follow best practices for the testing of radon. MDH's 'Best Practices for Radon Measurement in Minnesota Schools and Commercial Buildings' is available at [www.health.state.mn.us/divs/eh/indoorair/schools/radonschool.html](http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/eh/indoorair/schools/radonschool.html).

Questions about this survey or radon testing can be directed to Dan Tranter (651-201-4618 or [daniel.tranter@state.mn.us](mailto:daniel.tranter@state.mn.us)).