

LEARNING MATTERS

April 11, 2014

Agency News

Statement from Commissioner Cassellius on Passage of the Safe and Supportive Schools Act:

"Today, I stand with students, parents, and educators across the state to say thank you to Governor Dayton and the Minnesota Legislature for supporting and passing the Safe and Supportive Schools Act. All of our students deserve safe and supportive places where they can learn, thrive and succeed. With Governor Dayton's signature, Minnesota will no longer have one of the weakest anti-bullying laws in the nation, but instead will have a law that states clearly that Minnesotans are committed to putting our students' safety first." [Visit the Governor's website.](#)

Governor Dayton Signs the Safe and Supportive Schools Act Into Law – Now What?

On April 9, 2014, Governor Dayton signed [HF 826](#), the Safe and Supportive Schools Act, into law. Beginning in the 2014-2015 school year, all school boards will be required to adopt a local district and school student bullying policy that complies with the requirements of the new law. To assist schools and districts in crafting their student anti-bullying policies and to aid districts in resolving issues arising under the new policies, the new law establishes the School Safety Technical Assistance Center within the Minnesota Department of Education.

School Safety Technical Assistance Center

The Minnesota Department of Education's Safe and Healthy School Division, under the direction of Commissioner Cassellius, will establish a school safety technical assistance center to help districts and schools provide a safe and supportive learning environment and foster academic achievement for all students. [Read more on MDE website.](#)

Commissioner Cassellius to Highlight Early Childhood Investments in Chaska

Education Commissioner Brenda Cassellius will continue her statewide tour visiting early learning programs to meet with families benefiting from Governor Mark Dayton and the legislature's \$40 million investment in early learning scholarships. Commissioner Cassellius will visit the New Beginnings program in Chaska, which offers support to pregnant and parenting teens who are working toward earning their high school diploma. This unique program combines core academic instruction with parenting education and high quality on-site child care. [Read MDE news release.](#)

Supporting Students to Increase High School Graduation

Preventing students from dropping out of school is a critical component of meeting our goal of raising Minnesota's graduation rate to 90 percent by 2020. Thanks to a screening tool developed by the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE), it is possible to identify students—as early as sixth grade—who are starting to disengage from school.

MDE designed the Minnesota Early Indicator and Response System (MEIRS) to assist educators in tracking and supporting student progress toward high school graduation in four years. The tool provides a snapshot of students who are at increased risk of not completing high school on time. [Read more on the MDE website.](#)

Youth CareerConnect Grants Awarded

Congratulations to the Rosemount-Apple Valley-Eagan and St. Paul school districts on receiving Youth CareerConnect grants from the U.S. Department of Labor (US DOL) and U.S. Department of Education (US DOE)!

"I am proud that two of our state's school districts were selected by President Obama and the U.S. Department of Labor to spearhead this national movement to strengthen career preparation for our youth," Commissioner Brenda Cassellius said. [Read news release.](#)

By the Numbers

8 Consecutive Years - in which Minnesota students have ranked first in the nation on ACT scores among states where a majority of students take the exam.

74 Percent - of Minnesota students took the ACT exam in 2013.

1 in 4 - Minnesota students in grades five, eight and nine report being harassed or bullied because of weight or physical appearance.

Education in the News

Minnesota Students Score Perfection on ACT

Until last week, most of his classmates at Mounds Park Academy in Maplewood did not know that high school junior Matthew Ehren aced the ACT college entrance exam. [Read full story on Star Tribune.](#)

Dayton's Signature Caps Long-Fought Effort to Curb Bullying in Schools

It was, finally, Walter Roberts' moment in the sun... A professor of school counseling at Minnesota State University Mankato, Roberts is one of Safe Schools' under-celebrated champions. [Read full story at MinnPost.](#)

Dayton Signs Minnesota Anti-Bullying Bill

Winona Senior High School teacher Lora Hill doesn't understand opposition to Minnesota's new anti-bullying law. "Kids do not learn when they don't feel safe," she said -- that simple. [Read more on LaCrosse Tribune.](#)

Defying National Trend, Minnesota Increases Gifted Programs

In 2004, only two districts had full-time gifted programs; today, 15 districts offer these services. The number of full-time academic programs for gifted students has grown substantially in Minnesota over the past 10 years. [Read article on DA District Administration.](#)

Recent BloggED posts

Building a Better Minnesota for our Students

On Wednesday, Minnesota's State Capitol was buzzing with the sounds of students, parents, educators and advocates—Minnesotans from across the state who came together to watch Governor Mark Dayton sign the Safe and Supportive Schools Act into law. [Read more on BloggED.](#)

Kids Design Glass

Meet the young artists whose drawings inspired 14 fantastical glass sculptures produced with funds from a Minnesota Arts and Cultural Heritage grant by East Central Regional Library (ECRL). The project began during the 2013 summer reading program, when children ages 4-10 were invited to submit original drawings of an animal or object that could be turned into a glass blown art object. [Read more and view the gallery of glass sculptures.](#)

April is the Month of the Military Child!

Governor Mark Dayton has proclaimed April the "Month of the Military Child." During this month, military-connected youth throughout the state will be recognized for the sacrifices they make while a parent serves in the Armed Forces. [Read more about how you can be involved.](#)

Upcoming Events

Mark Your Calendar! June 9-12 Gifted and Talented Education Symposium

Don't miss the sixth annual Hormel Foundation Gifted and Talented Education Symposium, a collaboration between the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE), the Hormel Foundation and the Austin School District. Network with peers at the pre-conference events (one for parents and one for educators) on June 8. Connect, learn and engage via a wide array of daily sessions with expert presenters who'll share best practices in areas from the assessment of students for services, meeting student's social and emotional needs, engaging under-represented populations, how to handle under-achievement, and integrating STEM and technology into classroom lessons. [Space is limited so register now.](#)

The Minnesota eLearning Summit: July 30-31

2014 Theme: Open, Online, and Opportunity

Join us at the premier gathering place for K-12 and college/university educators and innovators committed to effective learning and use of technology in the Upper Midwest! Hear presentations from keynote speakers Dr. Cable Green, Creative Commons and OER guru, along with Dr. Robbie Melton, WCET app maven. The summit is a collaborative effort with the MN Learning Commons (University of Minnesota, Minnesota State Colleges and

Universities, Minnesota Department of Education) in partnership with myeFolio, TIES, Minitex and the University of Northwestern-St. Paul.

Early bird discounts are available through April 30, 2014, and there are discounts for team registrations. Visit the University of Northwestern's online ticketing site to register. [Learn more on the summit website.](#)

STEM Network Conference Keynote on Closing the Achievement Gaps - April 15, 2014

Sponsored by Boston Scientific, and Discovery Education, networking will begin at 9 a.m. and the conference program will take place from 10 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. at the University of Minnesota Continuing Education and Conference Center. The keynote presentation, "Closing the Achievement Gaps: Why STEM? Why Now?" will be delivered by Cindy Moss, director of Global STEM Initiatives, Discovery Education. The conference will also feature sessions on exemplary STEM teaching and learning and cross-sector collaborations; networking time; and a forum on current topics in STEM education and workforce development. [Register online.](#)

Thank You for reading Learning Matters. [Send questions or comments to L Hildebrant](#)