

Minnesota Association of School Administrators

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News Release

For Immediate Release: February 17, 2023

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Dr. Lisa Sayles-Adams Receives Kay E. Jacobs Memorial Award

(St. Paul, MN) – The Minnesota Association of School Administrators (MASA) has named Dr. Lisa Sayles-Adams, Superintendent of Eastern Carver County Schools, recipient of the 2023 Kay E. Jacobs Memorial Award. The award recognizes excellent leadership and involvement in MASA and other educational organizations by an administrator who is a woman. Dr. Sayles-Adams will be honored for her leadership, concern for students, and active involvement in professional and community affairs at a statewide recognition ceremony during the MASA/MASE Spring Conference held March 9-10, 2023.

“Lisa exemplifies a servant leader. She holds the highest ideals and standards for educational leaders, promotes academic excellence, cooperation, cultural awareness, and respect for diversity,” said Dr. Theresa Battle, Superintendent of the Burnsville-Eagan-Savage School District. “Lisa wants students to thrive socially, emotionally and educationally and not only do well in school, but in life. She works compassionately and collaboratively with diverse stakeholders on critical issues and creates transparency and engagement to find solutions and resolve issues.”

Dr. Sayles-Adams began her role as Superintendent of Eastern Carver County Schools on July 1, 2020. Prior to the superintendency, she served as Assistant Superintendent of Secondary Schools and Director of Secondary Teaching and Learning for North St. Paul-Maplewood-Oakdale School District, and as a Principal and then Assistant Superintendent for Saint Paul Public Schools. She began her career in education as a Middle School Teacher with Minneapolis Public Schools.

During her time at Eastern Carver County Schools, Dr. Sayles-Adams has successfully led the district through a global pandemic, a successful operating referendum campaign with the highest passage rate in the state (69%), and launched a comprehensive strategic plan. These accomplishments occurred through thoughtful stakeholder engagement, listening and building trust, and always keeping the district’s work focused on its central mission: providing a well-rounded and excellent education for every student.

Amid racial controversy and community divide, Dr. Sayles-Adams made efforts to create a safe, welcoming, and supportive environment within the district. She led her team through the creation of a comprehensive racial harm protocol to interrupt and eliminate disparaging comments and inappropriate behavior related to race-based language and actions. The racial

harm protocol includes job-embedded staff development, revised district policies and procedures, restorative practices, student support, and transparent communication. Student voice and stakeholder feedback have been integral to revising effective systems, processes, and the way adults respond to student needs within Eastern Carver County Schools.

Dr. Sayles-Adams is an active member in MASA. She has been a member of the MASA BIPOC Affinity Group and the MASA Nominating Committee. She is a graduate of the Minnesota Aspiring Superintendent's Academy.

Dr. Sayles-Adams' other professional involvement includes the Association of Metropolitan School Districts (AMSD), American Association of School Administrators (AASA), Metropolitan Educational Cooperative Service Unit (Metro ESCU) Board Member, and Southwest Metro Chamber of Commerce Board Member.

Dr. Sayles-Adams earned a doctorate in Educational Leadership from Minnesota State University, Mankato. She received a master's degree in Curriculum and Instruction and a bachelor's degree in Political Science from the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities.

The Memorial Award was established in 1983 in honor of Kay E. Jacobs, an outstanding young administrator of many achievements who died in a car accident in 1979. At the time of her death, Ms. Jacobs was the assistant superintendent for the Mahtomedi Schools and had just been nominated, through a national screening process, for membership in the 38th Annual Superintendents' Work Conference at Teachers' College, Columbia University. This was a distinct honor, because only forty-five outstanding chief school officers from school systems throughout the United States had been invited to participate. The Memorial Award recognizes women administrators who have demonstrated the attributes of leadership and involvement early in their careers as Kay Jacobs did.

Each year, MASA recognizes members for their contribution to public education. MASA is a professional organization of Minnesota's school leaders, including superintendents, assistant superintendents, directors of special education, and other central office administrators, as well as state department administrators, college and university professors, and other educators throughout Minnesota dedicated to educational leadership for students.

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Photo: Dr. Lisa Sayles-Adams

