Minnesota Association of School Administrators

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Governor Mark Dayton Receives MASA Distinguished Service Award

(St. Paul, Minn.) – The Minnesota Association of School Administrators (MASA) has named Governor Mark Dayton recipient of the Distinguished Service Award. Governor Dayton received his award for his support of the children of Minnesota and for his contributions in activities that have improved Minnesota's public education system. He will be honored at a statewide recognition ceremony during the MASA/MASE Spring Conference, March 8-9, 2018, at the Minneapolis Marriott Northwest in Brooklyn Park.

For the past 40 years, Mary Dayton has served Minnesotans as Commissioner of the Minnesota Departments of Economic Development and of Energy and Economic Development, State Auditor, United States Senator, and most recently as Governor. He was first Democrat to serve as governor in 20 years, succeeding Governor Tim Pawlenty. When Governor Dayton took office in January 2011, Minnesota faced a $6 billion projected budget deficit, and more than $2 billion had been borrowed from Minnesota school districts. Governor Dayton worked hard to repay our schools, and has successfully pushed for an additional $2 billion in new education investments, keeping his promise to increase funding for education every year he is governor.

These investments have included $1.73 billion for additional resources towards the K-12 funding formula, which provides schools with funding based on the number of students they teach, to ensure the basics of a good education are met: good teachers, textbooks, and materials to help kids learn and grow. A historic $134 million investment also made all-day kindergarten a reality across Minnesota, with more than 57,400 kindergarteners now enrolled across the state. And, this $1.73 billion has included more funding for special education, school counselors and support staff, funding for facilities improvements, and initiatives to boost math and reading proficiency and close opportunity gaps for students of color and indigenous youth.

In 2017, Governor Dayton announced a new public education spending goal that would increase by $609 million over a two-year span. The proposed spending in Governor Dayton's February 2017 budget plan would divert a significant chunk of money from the state's projected $1.4 billion surplus. This would expand pre-kindergarten and special education programs and increase the amount of money spent on each public-school student in the state.

Governor Dayton announced he will be outlining a school safety proposal in early March that will include financial support for school districts to shore up building security and to extend mental health help quickly to expelled students. Additionally, in late February, the Minnesota Department of Education released new high school graduation rate data, which showed that the Class of 2017 posted the highest graduation rate on record at 82.7 percent.

Dayton began his career teaching science in a New York City public school, calling it "the toughest job I've ever had." Because of the terrible injustice he saw, he decided to devote his life to improving social equality and economic opportunity for all Americans.

Dayton received a bachelor's degree in psychology, and graduated cum laude, from Yale University.

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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