Minnesota Association of School Administrators

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Superintendent Julie Critz Receives Kay E. Jacobs Memorial Award

(St. Paul, MN) – The Minnesota Association of School Administrators (MASA) has named Julie Critz, Superintendent of the Alexandria Public Schools, recipient of the 2017 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 with ten or less years of school district central office experience. Critz 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, March 9-10, 2017, at the Minneapolis Marriott Northwest in Brooklyn Park.

"I have worked with Julie as a colleague and as her mentor in our region and I believe Julie is one of the exceptional educational leaders in Minnesota. Her expertise and knowledge have helped her as the superintendent in Alexandria," said Lynne Kovash, Superintendent of the Moorhead Area Public Schools. "Julie has worked with teachers and the community to research, develop and continually test the idea of academies that guided the facility. Because of her efforts, Alexandria High School has been recognized nationally for the programming as well as the flexible, innovative facility."

During Critz's time at Alexandria Public Schools, she has been responsible for all academic programming and professional development across the district. She has provided leadership, oversight and facilitation to an ambitious and visionary group of people who set out to design a new academic program built around career-focused, small learning communities. The new program, known as the "Academies of Alexandria," is a model based upon the authentic and real life application of learning objectives traditionally taught in classrooms. The new model necessitated many changes, including a transition from a six period to four period schedule, an infusion of problem-based learning, establishment of career pathways and many new courses, implementation of a 1:1 initiative, and the creation of collaborative digital classrooms.

"Julie has a unique set of skills that separates her from other school leaders," said Chad Duwenhoegger, Principal of Alexandria High School. "She not only has the passion and drive to create a powerful vision, she has the skills and ability to create and implement change."

Critz is an active member and leader in many educational organizations. Her membership includes: MASA, Curriculum Leaders of Minnesota, AASA, EDLeader 21, Alexandria Area Chamber of Commerce, Alexandria Rotary Club, Lakes Area Professional Women, Forada Lions Club, and Habitat for Humanity. Critz received the 2015 Spirit of Professional Development Award from the Lakes Area Professional Women organization.

Critz received her bachelor's degree in elementary education from the University of Minnesota-Morris, her master's degree in elementary education from the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities, and a sixth-year certificate in educational administration from St. Cloud State University.

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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