Minnesota Association of School Administrators

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Superintendent Laine Larson Receives Kay E. Jacobs Memorial Award

(St. Paul, MN) – The Minnesota Association of School Administrators (MASA) has named Laine Larson, Superintendent of Brainerd Public Schools, recipient of the 2021 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. Larson 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 virtually March 11-12, 2021.

“Laine not only dedicates herself to the big needs and issues, she dedicates herself to the little things that make a huge difference in the lives of her students and staff," said Heidi Hahn, Assistant Superintendent of Brainerd Public Schools. “Laine is an experienced, ethical, driven and compassionate leader that demonstrates and possesses more ‘grit’ than any other leader I have had the privilege of working alongside. I am humbled and honored that I get a front-row seat to learn from her and be mentored by her.”

During her 38-year career in public education, Larson has focused her leadership effort toward enhancing, promoting, and providing equitable teaching and learning opportunities for all students in her districts. Larson has served as the Superintendent of Brainerd Public Schools since 2016. She was previously the Superintendent of Bagley Public Schools and Thief River Falls Public Schools. Prior to the superintendency, Larson served as a teacher, assistant principal, principal, and assistant superintendent.

As Superintendent of Thief River Falls Public Schools, Larson and her team implemented a 1:1 technology program in grades K-12, aligned and embedded curriculum with the academic standards, and enlisted membership and led an American Indian advisory team. Through her leadership, the district passed a $748 operating levy referendum and a voter-approved $70 million four-site facility bond referendum. Larson also sought to expand the skills and professional learning of her staff and encouraged her entire leadership team to participate in the Minnesota Principals Academy.

Throughout her time as a superintendent in Minnesota, Larson developed strong multidisciplinary advisory teams to guide the diverse educational needs of their American Indian students. Recently, Brainerd Public Schools committed to an equity initiative for all students by leading a district and community-wide effort. This essential assignment is in process, led by numerous skilled community representatives partnering together.

In 2018, Larson successfully led Brainerd Public Schools in the passage of a $205 million comprehensive facility bond referendum which has allowed the district to build or remodel 13 building sites. The bond has allowed the district to build a brand-new elementary school, world-class performing arts center with 1200 seats including a balcony and orchestra pit, and a new 8-lane pool with a competitive diving well.

Larson is an active member of MASA and the Minnesota Rural Education Association (MREA). She regularly presents at conferences and workshops hosted by MASA, MREA, and the Minnesota School Boards Association (MSBA).

Larson received the 2012 MASA Region 8 Regional Administrator of Excellence Award.

Larson earned a master’s degree in Special Education from Bemidji State University and a bachelor’s degree in Home Economics and Child Development/Family Relationships from North Dakota State University. She earned administrative licenses from St. Cloud State University and Minnesota State University-Moorhead.

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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