

Minnesota Association of School Administrators

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P R E S S
R E L E A S E

Electronic versions of this press release and Superintendent Olson's photograph are available. Please email Aimee Ranallo at MASA (aranallo@mnasa.org) to request copies.



Superintendent Jeffrey Olson

Jeffrey Olson is 2013 MN Superintendent of the Year

(St. Paul, Minn.) — The Minnesota Association of School Administrators (MASA) has named Superintendent Jeffrey J. Olson, Superintendent for Saint Peter Public Schools, the 2013 Minnesota Superintendent of the Year.

“I am truly honored and humbled to have been selected,” said Olson. “I believe that the superintendents of Minnesota play a key role in shaping the future of our state by working to ensure that each and every student we serve reaches her or his fullest potential and graduates from our schools career and college ready. It is a privilege to represent this group as the Minnesota Superintendent of the Year.”

As the Minnesota honoree, Superintendent Olson is a candidate among other state winners for National Superintendent of the Year, to be announced during the American Association of School Administrators (AASA) convention on February 21 - 23, 2013 in Los Angeles, CA.

Superintendent of the Year nominees are evaluated on how each candidate demonstrates:

- Leadership for learning—creativity in successfully meeting the needs of students in his or her school system.
- Communication skills—strength in both personal and organizational communication.
- Professionalism—constant improvement of administrative knowledge and skills, while providing professional development opportunities and motivation to others on the education team.
- Community involvement—active participation in local community activities and understanding of regional, national, and international issues.

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Superintendent Olson was selected for this honor by a panel of representatives from a variety of Minnesota education organizations. “Dr. Olson is truly a student-centered superintendent. He has been, and will continue to be, a role model for all educators in the state of Minnesota,” said MASA Executive Director Dr. Gary Amoroso. “Dr. Olson works in a collaborative fashion with the Saint Peter community to provide every student with an educational experience that will prepare the student for his or her future.”

Superintendent Olson has been with Saint Peter Public Schools since 1975, and has served as superintendent since 2003. With an enrollment of 1,893 students, the Saint Peter Public School District is located 60 miles southwest of Minneapolis, in the Minnesota River Valley. The district serves students in five locations and is an AdVancEd District Accredited School System, the first district in Minnesota to receive district-level accreditation. The Saint Peter Public School District is a place where “Learning Matters.” Olson explained, “This recognition would not possible without the hard work and support of the students, staff, administrators, board of education, and citizens of the Saint Peter School District. The collective work we have done to meet our vision that ‘Learning Matters’ and to successfully meet the needs of the students in our school system has been very exciting.”

Principal Paul Peterson, Saint Peter High School, nominated Superintendent Olson for the Superintendent of the Year Award. “I have had the privilege of working with Dr. Olson for the past nine years during my time as the high school principal, and can state without hesitation that he is the finest educational leader I have encountered in my professional career” said Peterson. “There are countless reasons he is an excellent candidate for the Superintendent of the Year, including his educational vision, courage to develop and implement innovative programming, and his commitment to developing emerging leaders. ”

Spurred by the U.S. Department of Education’s Race to the Top grant competition, more than a dozen states have passed laws to reform how teachers and principals are evaluated. Dr. Olson and his administrative team developed and implemented an annual evaluation process for all teachers in the district. In addition, Dr. Olson initiated a new principal evaluation process based on the model developed by the Minnesota statewide task force. In July 2012, The Saint Peter Public School District then modified the model due to the district’s participation in the State of Minnesota Principal Evaluation Pilot Program. Dr. Olson explained, “Principal performance measures will focus on standardized test results, the integration of technology to transform learning by teachers, and student discipline data as a measure of the effectiveness of the Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS) plan at each building level.”

Both the teacher and principal evaluation tools are designed to support Olson’s expectations that all students will gain a minimum of one year’s growth for each year spent in our school system, “Regardless of Race to the Top, No Child Left Behind, or any state-developed waiver system, this is a commitment to student learning that each school must guarantee to its students and families.”

During the summer of 2006, Dr. Olson challenged the administrative team to confront the brutal facts related to the academic performance of the district's low-income students. This challenge resulted in the District Summer Academic Program, a comprehensive program that includes: the "Read and Feed" summer nutrition program that provides free lunch to children as well as various learning activities; the "Summer Reads" program that provides two reading VISTA tutors to work in summer schools; the "Area Learning Center Summer School" that provides supplemental reading support to at-risk K-6 students; and the "Community Education Reading Academy" which is a theme-based book club experience for students in grades 3 - 6. Olson is pleased to share, "The results of the District Summer Academic Program are very positive. Over a six-year period, we have closed the achievement gap in reading from 23 percent gap between overall and free/reduced lunch proficiency, to a 12 percent gap in 2011, and a 10 percent gap in 2012."

Superintendent Olson has also made it a priority to communicate the district's purpose and future with his constituencies. "I have worked to implement a multi-faceted communication plan for the district emphasizing three areas. They include monthly pod-casts to promote specific elements of our school district's strategic plan, monthly articles in the district's newsletter which allows me to feature timely happenings, and presentations on the "State of the School District" to a variety of community groups." Over the past four years, Dr. Olson has also implemented a "Balanced Scorecard" to provide clear indicators of meeting the district's strategic plan measuring student achievement, perception of the district by the stakeholders, demographic and financial data, health and nutrition, and student measures. Olson explained, "Regardless of the medium, the focus of each communication is to share the story of our school district. This includes our district's vision of "Learning Matters", the innovative educational programs designed to meet the needs of all students, and the district's financial profile and cooperative efforts with other school districts and city organizations."

Across the nation, school districts are again facing significant cuts to their budgets. Superintendent Olson has taken numerous actions to address shortfalls in funding for the Saint Peter Public School District. Dr. Olson has worked with the Saint Peter Board of Education to implement comprehensive plans to secure additional referendum dollars from local taxpayers, resulting in the successful passage of operating general fund levies in 2005 and 2011, and the successful passage of a capital projects levy in 2009. In an effort to re-think how the school district provides high quality services, Dr. Olson has also successfully cultivated local and regional partnerships with the City of Saint Peter, local colleges, and local school districts. On a national level, Superintendent Olson has participated in numerous meetings with Congressman Tim Walz on federal funding for education, and also attended a "White House Rural Council Roundtable" focusing on private-public partnerships and federal investment in rural education hosted by Senator Amy Klobuchar.

Superintendent Olson received his Ph.D. from the University of Minnesota, his master's degree from Minnesota State University, Mankato and his bachelor's degree from Concordia College in Moorhead. Before becoming Superintendent for the Saint Peter Public School District, he served as the curriculum

director and high school principal. Dr. Olson is an active member of MASA, serving on multiple committees and previously as President on the Board of Directors. Currently, Dr. Olson is serving as President-Elect of the MASA Foundation Board of Directors. In 2007, Dr. Olson received the MASA Kay E. Jacobs Memorial Award.

MASA is a professional organization whose mission is to establish the statewide agenda for children, serve as the preeminent voice for public education, and empower members through quality services and support. MASA members are school superintendents, directors of special education, other central office school administrators, regional administrators, and higher education administrators and professors from throughout Minnesota.

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