

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 Dr. Prest's photograph are available. Please email Mary Law at MASA (mrlaw@mnasa.org) to request copies.

Gary Prest is 2006 MN Superintendent of the Year



Dr. Gary Prest

(St. Paul, Minn.) — — The Minnesota Association of School Administrators (MASA) has named Dr. Gary Prest, Superintendent for the Bloomington Schools, the 2006 Minnesota Superintendent of the Year.

As the Minnesota honoree, Dr. Prest is a candidate among other state winners for National Superintendent of the Year, to be announced at the American Association of School Administrators (AASA) convention, February 23 – 26, 2006 in San Diego, California.

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—consistently upgrading his or her administrative knowledge and skills, providing professional development and opportunities for other members of the education team, and motivating others.
- Community involvement—active participation in local community activities and understanding of regional, national, and international issues.

Dr. Prest was selected for this honor by a panel of representatives from a variety of Minnesota education organizations. “Gary Prest is a highly respected educational leader. Under his leadership, the Bloomington Schools have truly thrived,” says MASA Executive Director Dr. Charles Kyte. “He is the type of leader who will help to position Minnesota’s schools to provide excellent education through the next decade.”

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Dr. Prest has been superintendent for the Bloomington Schools since 1997. With an enrollment of 10,800 PreK through 12th grade students, Bloomington serves its suburban community in the Minneapolis-St. Paul area. The district insists on hiring the highest caliber of teachers and administrators which helps them to focus on rigorous student achievement. The mission of the Bloomington Schools is “to assure that each of our learners has the knowledge, skills and ethics to attain educational excellence and thrive in a rapidly changing world.”

Bloomington School Board Members nominated Dr. Prest for the Superintendent of the Year Award. “At the heart of every decision Dr. Prest makes -- whether larger or small -- is the impact on the students, the children he serves,” says the Board. “He ethically balances the needs of these students with the financial limitations imposed on the education system. When faced with an ethical decision, he chooses the ethically superior course of action, despite the cost. (Dr. Prest) is a compassionate individual that thrives on building relationships with everyone in the district.”

Dr. Prest is especially noted for his ability to create and support an environment for learning. In the nomination process for this award, Dr. Prest was asked about what changes he has made to ensure learning by all students as demographics continue to evolve in his district.

“To ensure that we bring out the best in each student, the staff and citizens of Bloomington have engaged in purposeful discussion and planning of a variety of programs and opportunities to ensure that our mission is a reality,” Dr. Prest responded. “The moral purpose of the employees of the District and each school is to continually raise up children from wherever they are and from wherever they have come. We believe that families are the most important influence on the learning of a child and in that spirit engage with parents, guardians and other family members to have the best outcomes for each child. Our real evaluation is found in the lives lived and contributions to society by our graduates.”

Dr. Prest also highlighted what the most rewarding aspect of his role as superintendent has been. “Although it is impossible to focus on just one aspect, equipping students with the knowledge, skills and ethics to take on this world and make it a better place is absolutely important vital work. I find it tremendously gratifying just to be a part of this noble undertaking.” Dr. Prest credits staff, community, and the school board for the district’s success. “Our staff demonstrates a passion for bringing out the best in learners. It is distinctly a pleasure to be their colleague. The municipality of Bloomington, from the mayor to each City employee, is strongly supportive of schools and children. It is a wonderful community for students and schools when the ‘outside world’ becomes engaged with its schools. I find it gratifying to have the trust of a School Board for which I have such high regard,” says Dr. Prest.

Parent Volunteer of the Bloomington Schools, Flora Tsukayama says, “(Dr. Prest) makes sure that the district takes care of its children and families. His efforts have always been in teaching all children. He supports the involvement of parents and programs that will help enhance our children’s education. He

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knows that communication with all parents is crucial.”

Minnesota Commissioner of Education Alice Seagren praises Dr. Prest’s leadership. “I have had the pleasure of working with him for many years as a legislator representing Bloomington and the Bloomington School District and now as the Minnesota Commissioner of Education,” says Commissioner Seagren. “Integrity, honesty, innovation and respect for each individual are hallmarks of his tenure as superintendent. He deserves the honor and I am proud to be one of his biggest supporters.”

The City of Bloomington Mayor Gene Winstead highly recommended Dr. Prest for this award. “Gary has appropriately undertaken both cost reductions and levy referendums in order to preserve and enhance the School District’s primary function of education during the past several years of very stringent funding constraints,” says Mr. Winstead. “Gary has provided outstanding leadership in moving not only the Bloomington Schools forward but also benefiting the wider Bloomington community as well.”

Dr. Prest holds doctoral and specialist’s degrees from the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities; a master’s of education degree in elementary education from the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities; and a bachelor of science degree with distinction in elementary education from the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities. Before becoming Superintendent for the Bloomington Schools, he was Director of Administrative Services and Elementary Principal with the Hopkins Schools, and a Coordinator of Staff Development with the Burnsville-Eagan-Savage Schools.

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, central office school administrators, regional administrators, and higher education administrators and professors from throughout Minnesota.

Springsted Incorporated, public finance advisors, is sponsor of the Minnesota Superintendent of the Year program. ARAMARK Education and the American Association of School Administrators are cosponsors of the National Superintendent of the Year award program.

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