

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



Dr. Dennis Peterson

Dennis Peterson is 2009 MN Superintendent of the Year

(St. Paul, Minn.) — — The Minnesota Association of School Administrators (MASA) has named Dr. Dennis Peterson, Superintendent for the Minnetonka Schools, the 2009 Minnesota Superintendent of the Year.

As the Minnesota honoree, Dr. Peterson 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 on February 20, 2009 in San Francisco, 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—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.

Dr. Peterson was selected for this honor by a panel of representatives from a variety of Minnesota education organizations. “Dennis Peterson is truly an exemplary leader,” says MASA Executive Director Dr. Charles Kyte. “He is a skilled collaborative leader who knows how to help his district

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community envision positive change and chart a course for achievement. We are proud to have Dennis represent Minnesota's superintendents as Superintendent of the Year."

Dr. Peterson has been superintendent for the Minnetonka Schools since 2001. With an enrollment of 8,140 students, Minnetonka serves students in ten suburban communities southwest of Minneapolis, plus 933 students who are allowed to "open enroll" under Minnesota law. Students come from middle class to upper middle class families. There are nine schools within the Minnetonka School District. The district had above average performance before 2001, and it has steadily climbed to nationally competitive levels on ACT and SAT scores. The addition of IB in 2003 and language immersion (Spanish and Chinese) in 2007 added to the quality of the schools. Minnetonka Schools have become widely acknowledged as one of the nation's leading districts in using technology for communications and instruction. Struggling to pass levy increases in 2001, the district has gained outstanding support and has passed four ballot issues since 2001 to support the vision of excellence.

The Minnetonka School Board nominated Dr. Peterson for the Superintendent of the Year Award. "It is Dr. Peterson's leadership and his willingness to 'do what it takes' to meet the needs of the children in our community that has earned such a high level of credibility," says Minnetonka School Board Chair Pamela Langseth. "The Minnetonka School District is fortunate to have Dr. Peterson leading the charge focused on world-class child-centered excellence."

Dr. Peterson is especially noted for his personal commitment to excellence in student achievement and fiscal responsibility. Living by his motto of children first, Dr. Peterson has inspired others within the District to also put children first. This commitment has yielded outstanding results in student performance. He has secured significant financial support for district initiatives through successful operating levies. His vision for technology has propelled the District to be nationally recognized which has contributed to the District's ability to attract both families and staff into the District. By implementing four key initiatives, Dr. Peterson has successfully balanced the District's budget, passed referenda, attracted open enrollment students and restructured the District's debt by improving services and reducing expenses.

Dr. Peterson was asked what the theme for the Superintendent of the Year Award "Democracy's Promise: Educate Every Child" means to him.

"The incredible power of America is the opportunity it offers for everyone who lives here to achieve great results for themselves and their families. The foundation for that opportunity for success is secured by our public schools. Because we welcome every child to our schools, we create an incredible dynamic for the growth, learning and achievement of every child who attends the public schools." Dr. Peterson goes on to say, "The outstanding results achieved for every student do not just happen. Great outcomes

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are the result of leadership in each public school district by superintendents and their assistants. We have developed a powerful commitment from one generation to the next. Every generation has the responsibility and obligation to insure the education of future generations. Breaking that cycle would surely destroy, 'Democracy's Promise' and America's foundation!"

Dr. Peterson was asked how he has creatively used technology as a communication tool within his district.

"The Minnetonka District has become widely acknowledged for its incredible use of technology to communicate well with parents and staff members and to enable more powerful teaching and greater student learning," Dr. Peterson stated. "Changing the paradigm for technology in the District from learning about technology to learning how to use technology for communications and teaching and learning were exemplified through the use of a model classroom."

In a joint letter of support from the Minnetonka School District Community Leaders, Dr. Peterson is praised for, "[being] a tireless advocate for public education as the foundation for our democracy and for the public schools as a gathering place for our community. In addition to being an outstanding educational leader – student achievement has increased by every measure during his tenure – Dr. Peterson is an involved and visible community leader. He is a champion for children and we are proud to have his leadership in Minnetonka Schools."

In a letter on behalf of the Minnetonka School District Legislative Delegation, Minnesota State Senator Terri Bonhoff praised Dr. Peterson's leadership. "Dr. Peterson has brought innovation to the classroom using state of the art technology to re-engage the student learning community...One has only to walk through the halls of these schools to feel the excitement of young people deeply engaged in learning. The culture he has built in partnership with his school community is collaborative not competitive, inquisitive not arrogant. Dennis is the kind of leader who has inspired parents to be directly engaged in their children's education, knowing that parents are the key to student success."

Dr. Peterson received his Ph.D. from the University of Colorado, and he holds master's and bachelor of science degrees from the University of South Dakota. Before becoming Superintendent for the Minnetonka Schools, he was a superintendent for six other school districts, including the Southland Schools in Adams, MN. He was also an Assistant Superintendent for the Mounds View 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, other central office

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

AIG VALIC sponsors the Minnesota Superintendent of the Year program. ARAMARK Education, ING and the American Association of School Administrators are co-sponsors of the National Superintendent of the Year award program.

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