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Governor Dayton and Minnesota Teachers Usher in New Era of Collaboration to Advance Meaningful Evaluation of Principals

(ST. PAUL, Minn.) — When it comes to evaluating principals, Minnesota teachers say that parents, students, staff and the community need to have a voice in the discussion. This idea is one of 10 key recommendations offered by teachers according to a new report released by the Dayton Administration, Education Minnesota and The VIVA Minnesota Teachers' Project.

Dayton, Education Commissioner Brenda Cassellius and Education Minnesota President Tom Dooher met Wednesday with representatives of The VIVA Project, a national nonprofit that brings the perspective of teachers to policy debates, to hear VIVA's recommendations for the development of a new principal evaluation system.

Using cutting-edge technology and social media, The VIVA Project conducted an online "Idea Exchange," in which classroom teachers and other educators in public schools across Minnesota spent hundreds of hours considering how principals could best support students and teachers, and how those efforts should be measured.

In Minnesota, 600 teachers participated. Their ideas were distilled into 10 key recommendations. Among them:

- **All stakeholders—parents, students, staff, community—need to be involved in a principal's evaluation.** Multiple perspectives help create a transparent process and protect it from bias. The outside voices will also give school leaders fresh insights into their schools.
- **Design a strong support system for struggling principals.** This could take many forms, including appointing a mentor principal or using outside consultants.
- **Measure all parts of a principal's performance, including setting clear instructional goals, creating a positive school climate and managing a school.**

The VIVA Teachers' project complements the work of the Minnesota Department of Education's Principal Evaluation Working Group, which recently finished its recommendations. The department and the Legislature will now consider the working group's report and the VIVA results as they determine the most effective ways to evaluate principals. This unique collaboration was made possible through the generous support of the Bush Foundation.

In his State of the State address last week, Dayton said, "Our teachers are the front-line professionals with the greatest practical insights into how to best support our students' learning. The best way for us to positively impact the learning experience of our students is to effectively solicit – and use - their expertise and wisdom."

"Teachers' perspectives and ideas are an invaluable resource in informing critical education policy issues," said Education Minnesota President Tom Dooher. "We are gratified that our partnership with the Department of Education and The VIVA Project has helped enable their voices to be heard."

Commissioner of Education Brenda Cassellius said, "Every child deserves a great principal and teacher. Ensuring we have the best educators in the classroom is critical for a child's success, because we know that how they work and interact together often determines how far children will go. This online collaboration gives a voice to those educators, brings them to the table and allows them to help shape the evaluation conversation."

"Our aim is to give a voice to teachers. They bring practical experience and understand what makes great schools. Their professional perspective is so important in making big changes to education policy that produce positive and lasting impacts on schools, classrooms and student learning," said Elizabeth Evans, founding CEO of The VIVA Project, "Minnesota is an ideal place for us to partner. The leaders here are determined and bold."

About Education Minnesota

Education Minnesota represents 70,000 professionals working together for excellence in education for all students. Education Minnesota's members include teachers and educational support professionals in Minnesota's public school districts, faculty members at Minnesota's community and technical colleges and University of Minnesota campuses in Duluth and Crookston, retired educators and student teachers. Education Minnesota is affiliated with the American Federation of Teachers, National Education Association and AFL-CIO.

About Minnesota Department of Education

Since her appointment in 2011, Commissioner Cassellius has led MDE in collaborative work to ensure all Minnesota children have equitable opportunities to succeed in school and in life. Key agency efforts include implementing new teacher and principal evaluation and alternative teacher licensure laws enacted during the 2011 special session, and working with the Legislature on bipartisan early literacy initiatives. Most recently, MDE worked to create a better accountability system for Minnesota schools, acting early to secure a waiver from elements of the current No Child Left Behind law and positioning Minnesota as an early contender among 37 other states applying for similar waivers.

About The VIVA Project

The VIVA Project is operated by New Voice Strategies, a nonprofit organization whose mission is to improve the quality and reach of government service by engaging front line professionals and citizens in

key policy decisions. The VIVA Teachers' Project was created to raise the level of classroom teachers' voices in education policy. As a neutral third party, VIVA partners with local stakeholders, advocates and public officials seeking to make positive change in their public education system.

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