
LEARNING MATTERS

March 28, 2014

Agency News

Task Force and Work Groups

Remember the catchy “School House Rock” song about how a bill becomes a law? It left out a lot of the behind-the-scenes, early-on discussions, objections, concerns and actions from citizens and organizations confronting a problem or issue and working to find a solution. The citizens who lend their expertise and time to serve on work groups and task forces have become an integral part of the work done each year at the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE).

Hundreds of individuals participated in the work required to complete the charge of a variety of task forces this past summer and fall. Just as critical are the dedicated agency staff members who facilitate and support the efforts of these groups and ensure that deadlines are met, reports filed and results and recommendations shared. [Read more on the MDE Website.](#)

Sixth Annual Gifted and Talented Education Symposium

Join us at Riverland Community College in Austin, June 9-12. A pre-conference will be held June 8. [Registration open now.](#)

Gifted and talented children and youth are those students with outstanding abilities, identified at preschool, elementary, and secondary levels.

The potential of gifted students requires differentiated and challenging educational programs and/or services beyond those provided in the general school program.

The sixth annual Hormel Foundation Gifted and Talented Education Symposium provides an opportunity for educators, counselors, administrators and parents to gain greater understanding of the unique needs of gifted and high potential learners. Daily sessions address best practices on a variety of topics, in the assessment of students for services, program models, social and emotional needs, instructional strategies, under-represented populations and more. [Visit Austin Schools to register.](#) [Visit the Gifted Education Web page](#) on the MDE Website.

The Changing Face of School Integration

The school integration program has gone through some changes since its start in 2000. When Jesse Ventura was elected governor, Minnesota was facing segregation and educational inadequacy lawsuits in Minneapolis and St. Paul. Legislation was enacted to address school segregation and to teach children to learn and work in a multicultural world.

The 2000 Desegregation Rule was accompanied by expansion of integration revenue to every eligible district in the state, instead of just Minneapolis, St. Paul, and Duluth. Those three "cities of the first class" had received integration revenue prior to the Desegregation Rule. [Read full story on the MDE Website.](#)

By the Numbers

- **\$46 Million** - investment in early education scholarships means 8,000 more kids can attend high-quality pre-k programs.
- **91 percent** - of Minnesota ninth graders reported that they agreed, or strongly agree with the statement, "I feel safe at school."
- **73 percent** - of Minnesota pre-school children are ready for kindergarten. Up from 60 percent in 2010.

Opportunities

Special Education Advisory Panel Vacancies

The Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) seeks qualified candidates to fill vacancies on the Special Education Advisory Panel (SEAP). SEAP is a federally mandated advisory group providing policy guidance on special education and related services for children with disabilities in Minnesota. Members participate in four to six meetings held in the metro area each year. Applicants may [apply through the Office of the Minnesota Secretary of State](#) and members are appointed by the Commissioner of Education. Applications will be accepted beginning April 7 through April 29, 2014.

Education in the News

Basic-Skills Exam for Teachers Remains Despite Efforts to Scrap it

Legislative efforts to repeal a controversial test for Minnesota's aspiring teachers have all but sputtered out this year, but questions linger about whether the exam presents unfair challenges to teachers of color and those whose native language is not English. [Read full Star Tribune article.](#)

Lakeville's Young Entrepreneurs Program has Business Saying YEA

Like many kids, Anna Marie Mitchell and best friend Selina Woo have what they think is a great idea for a business. Instead of just talking about it, the pair has been refining "Big Brain Cards" all year as part of the Young Entrepreneurs Academy (YEA). [Read full Star Tribune story.](#)

Count 'em: 23 Amendments Ready for Education Policy Omnibus Bill

Some 23 amendments awaited HF 2397 when the House Education Policy Committee began its review of the omnibus bill on Thursday morning. The bill is a diverse collection of policies

dealing with bilingualism to lotteries and allowing schools to donate unused food. [Read more on Twin Cities Daily Planet.](#)

Trying to Close a Knowledge Gap, Word by Word

Recent research shows that brain development is buoyed by continuous interaction with parents and caregivers from birth, and that even before age two, the children of the wealthy know more words than do those of the poor. Deisy Ixcuna-González, the 16-month-old daughter of Guatemalan immigrants, is wearing a tiny recorder that captures every word she hears and utters. [Visit NY Times for more.](#)

An Orchestra... and a Choir That Inspires

The cellos swelled to life first. Violins followed, only to recede slightly to create space for the choir. It was the first time the Viva City Choir and Orchestra—700 students from 11 Minneapolis middle and high schools—had run through an original composition, “Controlled Burn.” No one expected it to sound rehearsed. Yet when the students' voices rose, it was in concert. [Read MinnPost article.](#)

Recent BloggED posts

Creating a World’s Best Workforce Plan

The World's Best Workforce bill asks districts throughout the state to create a plan that alligns curriculum and works to increase student achievement. As a member of District 622's teaching and leadership team, Sharon Burrell is part of North St Paul's efforts to create a World's Best Workforce plan. [Visit BloggED for more.](#)

Guest Post from the Minnesota Office of Higher Education: The Burgeoning State of Higher Education in Minnesota

Minnesota is not only the land of 10,000 lakes, it is also home to nearly 200 colleges and universities and over 450,000 postsecondary students. When considering numbers this large, trends can be difficult to spot – especially when you consider the massive amounts of higher education data that is collected statewide and nationally. A recent report provides meaning to this data. [Read full story on BloggED.](#)

Upcoming Events

Viva City Festival Orchestra and Choir Performance: April 28-29

This year marks the 20th anniversary of Minneapolis Public Schools' Viva City Festival, an annual student fine arts celebration going on since early January. Intra-district orchestra and choir performances—of original material created by Minneapolis hip-hop and spoken word artist Dessa and composer Jocelyn Hagan—will be the festival's final events, Monday and Tuesday, April 28-29, at the Minneapolis Convention Center, 7 p.m. Performances are free and open to the public.

Who Will Be the 2014 Teacher of the Year?

Ten teachers from across the state have been named finalists in the 2014 Minnesota Teacher of the Year program. A selection panel of 25 leaders in the areas of education, business,

government and non-profits selected the finalists from a group of 33 semifinalists. The panel meets again May 3, to conduct final interviews and cast votes for the 2014 Minnesota Teacher of the Year. 2013 Minnesota Teacher of the Year, Megan Olivia Hall, will announce this year's honoree at a banquet on May 4, 2014.

Education Minnesota, the 70,000-member statewide educators union, organizes and underwrites the Teacher of the Year program. [Visit EdMN site for list of finalists.](#)

Sixth Annual Hormel Gifted and Talented Symposium: June 9-12

The sixth annual Hormel Foundation Gifted and Talented Education Symposium will be held at Riverland Community College in Austin. Educators, counselors, administrators and parents are invited to gain greater understanding of the unique needs of gifted and high potential learners. Invited speakers include many of the field's finest regionally, nationally and internationally known presenters, focusing on foundational knowledge, creativity, curriculum strategies, and social/emotional needs. Continuing education units will be available for administrators and teachers. [Visit Austin Public Schools to register.](#)

Thank You for reading Learning Matters. [Send questions or comments to L Hildebrant](#)