

Minnesota Association of School Administrators
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News Release

For Immediate Release: November 9, 2021

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Dr. Michael Funk is the 2022 Minnesota Superintendent of the Year

(St. Paul, MN) – The Minnesota Association of School Administrators (MASA) has named Dr. Michael Funk, Superintendent of Albert Lea Area Schools the 2022 Minnesota Superintendent of the Year. As the Minnesota honoree, Dr. Funk is a candidate among other state recipients for National Superintendent of the Year, to be announced during the American Association of School Administrators (AASA) National Conference on Education on February 17-19, 2022, in Nashville, TN. Dr. Funk was selected for this honor by a panel of representatives from a variety of Minnesota education organizations. Nominees are evaluated on how each candidate demonstrates leadership for learning, communication skills, professionalism, and community involvement.

During his tenure at Albert Lea Area Schools, Dr. Funk has led the development of systems to support an equity framework that has reduced barriers to student learning, provided focused resources for students, and provided quality professional development opportunities to staff. Albert Lea Area Schools' equity work is focused within the pillar of opportunity and achievement with an emphasis on four key areas: understanding the culture of their diverse students; examining the impact of poverty on their student's education; understanding the mental health needs of their students; and aligning special education instruction to support the needs of their students in a mainstream setting.

Under Dr. Funk's leadership, Albert Lea Area Schools' district-wide graduation rates increased from 68% to 81% from 2012-2021. The district also saw increases in graduation rates between 26% to 44% among Hispanic students, English language learners, special education students, and students on free and reduced meal programs.

In 2019, Dr. Funk led the District's Learning Team to the High-Reliability School's Leadership Summit (HRS). During the 2019-20 school year, every building in the district was certified as a Level 1 HRS School. As part of the process, each building in the district evaluated its learning environment through the lens of a Safe, Supportive, and Collaborative Culture. The focus of the district over the next two years is to reach HRS Level Two: Effective Teaching in Every Classroom. The goal is for the teachers to learn from each other, have a quality discussion on effective learning, and transfer the positive aspects of the lesson to their classroom.

"It is clear that Dr. Funk is a student-centered superintendent who has a sharp focus on equity and leadership development," said MASA Executive Director Deb Henton. "Dr. Funk is an exceptional model of leadership for his students, regional peers, and across the entire state of Minnesota. We are very proud to have Dr. Funk represent our administrators as Minnesota's Superintendent of the Year."

Dr. Funk has been the Superintendent of Albert Lea Area Schools since 2009. Prior to Albert Lea, he was the Superintendent of the Bird Island Olivia Lake Lillian (BOLD) School District. Funk also served as a high school principal in Pepin, WI, and taught high school social studies at Dover-Eyota.

Dr. Funk served for 30 years in the Army National Guard, retiring in 2018 at the rank of Colonel. Significant operational assignments include Infantry Battalion Commander in Kosovo in 2007-08, and Chief of the Joint Staff in 2018, in which he was responsible for the oversight of security operations for 600 members of the Minnesota National Guard during Super Bowl 52. Col. Funk also deployed to Bosnia, and participated in a Multinational Exercise NATO in Greece.

Dr. Funk is an active member of MASA and the American Association of School Administrators (AASA). He has served on the MASA Federal Advocacy and Executive Development committees. Dr. Funk is also a member of the Superintendent Advisory Council, Southeast Services Collaborative, and the National Guard Association of the United States.

Dr. Funk is active within his community. His involvement includes serving as a Trustee for the Mayo Clinic Health System of Albert Lea and Austin, Albert Lea-Freeborn County Board of Directors, Daybreaker's Kiwanis, United Way of Freeborn County, and the Freeborn County Family Services Collaborative Board.

Dr. Funk earned a Doctorate in Educational Policy and Administration from the University of Minnesota. He holds a Master's degree in Strategic Studies from the United States Army War College and a Master's degree in Education from the University of St. Thomas. Dr. Funk received a Bachelor's degree in Government from St. John's University.

Dr. Funk is originally from Rochester, MN, and has been married to Anne for 26 years. They are the proud parents of three daughters.

The Minnesota Superintendent of the Year Award is sponsored by ATS&R, Planners/Architects/Engineers. Visit their website at www.atsr.com.

For more information on the AASA Superintendent of the Year Program, please visit www.aasa.org.

MASA is a professional organization of Minnesota's school leaders, including superintendents, assistant superintendents, directors of special education, and other central office administrators, as well as state department administrators, college, and university professors, and other educators throughout Minnesota dedicated to educational leadership for students.

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