

Minnesota Association of School Administrators

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News Release

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Dr. Lynne Kovash Receives MASA Polaris Leadership Award

(St. Paul, MN) – The Minnesota Association of School Administrators (MASA) has named Dr. Lynne Kovash, Retired Superintendent of Moorhead Area Public Schools, as the recipient of the 2018 MASA Polaris Leadership Award. Dr. Kovash will be honored for her exemplary school leadership and a lifetime of achievement in education and the wider community at a statewide recognition ceremony at the 2018 MASA Fall Conference, October 1-2 in Brainerd, Minnesota.

Polaris, the “North Star,” themes this award because, just as exemplary administrators serve as definitive leaders, Polaris is constant and unmoving in the sky. A navigator’s benchmark, the star marks “true north,” the fundamental direction that defines east, west and south. With this award, Dr. Kovash is recognized for qualities such as professional courage, creation of a legacy of excellent leadership, fostering innovation, contribution through example and mentoring, exemplary conduct reflecting integrity and bearing emulation, and significant tenure in each position supporting district vision and affecting positive change.

“Lynne is a thoughtful, informed leader who is an unapologetic advocate for all students. She has demonstrated time and again her willingness to share her vision and passion with students and community members,” said William Tomhave, current School Board Member and former Chair of the Moorhead Area Public Schools School Board. “In light of Lynne's humble, selfless approach to her work and the positive impact of her leadership, I believe she is excellent choice for the MASA Polaris Leadership Award.”

Dr. Kovash spent her entire career in education with the Moorhead Area Public Schools. After serving for nine years as Superintendent, Dr. Kovash retired in June 2017. Prior to the superintendency, she was the Assistant Superintendent of Teaching and Learning, Supervisor of Planning and Assessment, Assistant Principal, and a Special Education Teacher.

Dr. Kovash’s first year as Superintendent was filled with both opportunities and improvements. In 2008, the district faced declining enrollment, decreased funding, snowstorms, and community-wide flooding. The district had to make approximately \$5 million in reductions. Dr. Kovash used a collaborative process to work through reductions in staff and programs. She learned to work with the Minnesota Department of Education, school staff, administration, and community members to provide the best education for students and to keep the focus on students. The district was unable to pass an operating levy referendum in 2009, so Dr. Kovash worked together with administration to develop a plan to better communicate the spending priorities of the district to community members. In November 2010, the district was able to pass a \$850 per pupil operating levy. The development of the annual operating plan priorities provided fiscal learning accountability to the community.

Dr. Kovash led the district through a strategic planning process in 2013. The district continues to use the community-developed strategic plan today.

In 2015 Dr. Kovash oversaw the approval of a \$78.2 million bond referendum to build a new grades K-4 elementary school, grades 5-6 school connected to the current middle school, and safety and security upgrades for all buildings.

Dr. Kovash implemented the AdvancEd process for continuous improvement and accreditation. She worked together with the lead administrator for the district to develop the training and processes for the first accreditation visit. The district participated in its first external review and received accreditation as a result of the first review. The process is now using the recommendations for improvement to further refine and develop district systems.

Dr. Kovash was an involved member of MASA and its national affiliate, AASA. She served as MASA President in 2014-15 and was a member of the AASA Governing Board. Dr. Kovash was also active member on all four MASA committees and was a member of the MASA Foundation Board.

Dr. Kovash served as the President for the Moorhead Rotary and was a member of the Minnesota Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, Greater Fargo Moorhead Economic Development Corporation, United Way of Cass-Clay in Fargo, Minnesota State University-Moorhead (MSUM) Foundation Board, and the Fargo-Moorhead Chamber of Commerce. Dr. Kovash has also served on the Minnesota Department of Education Local Assessment and Accountability Advisory Committee, the Minnesota Department of Education Assessment and Accountability Working Group, and on the advisory committees for Tri-College University and MSUM. She was also involved in EdLeader 21 and served on the Superintendent Advisory Committee for the national organization.

Dr. Kovash received her doctorate in Educational Leadership from the University of North Dakota. She obtained K-12 principal, special education director and superintendent licenses from Tri-College University in Fargo, ND. Dr. Kovash earned a master's degree in Special Education and a bachelor's degree in English from Minnesota State University-Moorhead.

Each year, MASA recognizes members for their contribution to public education. MASA is a professional organization of Minnesota's school leaders whose members include over 900 public education and non-public superintendents, directors of special education, curriculum and technology leaders, other central office administrators, service providers, business partners and retirees.

MASA is grateful to Ehlers for their ongoing support of the Polaris Award. Ehlers is an independent municipal financial advisory company that has served public sector clients since 1955.

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