

Minnesota Association of School Administrators

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News Release

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Deb Henton is the 2018 Minnesota Superintendent of the Year

(St. Paul, MN) – The Minnesota Association of School Administrators (MASA) has named Dr. Deb Henton, Superintendent of North Branch Area Public Schools (NBAPS), as the 2018 Minnesota Superintendent of the Year.



Dr. Deb Henton
Superintendent
North Branch Area Public Schools

As the Minnesota honoree, Dr. Henton is a candidate among other state recipients for National Superintendent of the Year, to be announced during the American Association of School Administrators (AASA) convention held on February 15-17, 2018 in Nashville, TN. Dr. Henton 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.

“It is undeniable that Dr. Henton is committed to excellence and it is truly a testament to her outstanding leadership and innovative spirit that we are honoring her with the 2018 Minnesota Superintendent of the Year Award,” said MASA Executive Director Dr. Gary Amoroso. “Not only is Dr. Henton an inspiration in her district and the surrounding North Branch community, but she has proven to be a true leader within MASA and across the state.”

Dr. Henton has led NBAPS in the development and implementation of two five-year strategic plans, resulting in: new course offerings; updated buildings; the establishment of an education foundation; greater efficiency of systems; better support of students, staff, and families; a 1:1 digital device initiative for grades 5-12; all-day kindergarten; Spanish K-12; and early childhood programming beginning at age three. Data is maintained annually on the action items completed, standardized test scores, attendance of students and staff, graduation rates, and budget and finance information.

In 2014, Dr. Henton implemented a literacy change in NBAPS’ primary and intermediate grades. The balanced literacy framework provides teachers with instructional methodologies that are observable and directly correlated to student achievement. This increase in student achievement is illustrated through the district’s 2017 MCA III reading test results where 70.3% of NBAPS students receiving free and reduced lunches had medium to high growth from third to fourth grade compared to 56.8% in 2016, and 64.4% of NBAPS students receiving special education services had medium to high growth from third to fourth grade.

Under Dr. Henton’s leadership, NBAPS enacted its current Community Engagement Plan to improve the district’s overall community engagement. The plan included identifying “key communicators” within the community and sending them regular communications; creating the “Supe of the Day” blog; integrating Facebook and Twitter within daily communications; and creating and sharing podcasts and summaries of school board meetings with NBAPS staff. The district also implemented the use of a mass communication phone system, a weekly newspaper column to keep parents and community members informed, and an online engagement software system, *Thoughtexchange*, to bring diverse members of the community together to provide feedback to the district. The *Thoughtexchange* system provides staff, parents, and community members with an anonymous avenue to comment on the district’s goals. The feedback is shared with the school board and decision makers in the district.

NBAPS has undertaken many innovative actions in response to cuts to education budgets, most notably the enactment of a four-day school week during 2010-2014, a move that saved the district an estimated \$250,000 a year. Prior to implementation, Dr. Henton held a series of public meetings to demonstrate the need, explain the problems with state funding that precipitated the schedule change, and describe how the district would implement

the schedule efficiently and effectively. During the deliberation phase of the four-day school week, Dr. Henton maintained a website dedicated to four-day week research, news articles, district reporting, and committee information.

Dr. Henton created a budgeting process titled the "Budget Boot Camp" to get the most out of available resources and to enrich the district's opportunities even when reducing budgets. The Budget Boot Camp is a yearlong process where study topics are collected throughout the year from school board or administrative team members, staff, or community members. The ultimate result of the Budget Boot Camp is a budget recommendation that is presented to the school board for its consideration.

"In her tenure at North Branch, Dr. Henton has transformed and rebuilt the bond between the community and the school district," said NBAPS School Board Chair Kirby Ekstrom. "Her selection as the Minnesota Superintendent of the Year will certainly serve as an inspiration to her colleagues not only in the state, but across the nation."

Dr. Henton is an active MASA member currently serving as President-Elect to the MASA Board of Directors. She is also a member of MASA's Professional Assistance Team, Legislative Committee, and Foundation Board. Dr. Henton presents annually at the Great Start Cohort workshop series for new administrators and has been a coach for the Aspiring Superintendent's Academy. She is also actively involved with Schools for Equity in Education (SEE), the Board of School Administrators (BOSA), Technology and Informational Services (TIES), and the American Association of School Administrators (AASA).

Dr. Henton received the 2015 Administrator of Excellence for MASA's Region 6 and the 2014 Kay E. Jacobs Memorial Award. She was named the 2011 eSchool News Tech-Savvy Superintendent and the 2013 Outstanding Service Award recipient from the Minnesota Service Cooperatives.

Dr. Henton is a member of various community organizations including the Chisago County Children's Collaborative, North Branch Rotary and Chamber of Commerce, and she was one of the founders of the North Branch Area Education Foundation. Previously, Dr. Henton has served as a member of the Executive Board for the Forest Lake YMCA.

Dr. Henton has served as a junior and senior high school social studies teacher and assistant principal in the South Washington County School District where she was named Woodbury's 1995 Teacher of the Year. She later served as an Assistant Principal at Stillwater Area High School and Principal at Harding High School, where she led for five years before being promoted to St. Paul's Executive Director of Alternative Learning Programs. While Principal of Harding, Dr. Henton was named the 2004 MASSP Capitol Division Principal of the Year. In 2006, she was appointed the Chief of Staff for Saint Paul Public Schools, where her primary responsibility was developing the district's five-year strategic plan. In 2007, Dr. Henton began serving as the Superintendent of North Branch Area Public Schools.

Dr. Henton earned a doctorate degree in Educational Leadership, a master's degree in Education, and an Educational Administrative Licensure from Saint Mary's University. She received a bachelor's degree in Social Studies from the University of Wisconsin-River Falls.

The Minnesota Superintendent of the Year Award is sponsored by ATS&R, Planners/Architects/Engineers. Visit their web site 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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