

# **Brenda Cassellius, Ed.D.**

*Commissioner of Education, State of Minnesota  
St. Paul, MN*

Since her appointment as Commissioner of Education in 2010, Dr. Brenda Cassellius has endeavored to enact comprehensive education reform that will benefit every child throughout Minnesota. Her straightforward, community-driven approach toward providing the best education possible has resulted in a remarkable list of accomplishments.

Under her leadership, the Minnesota Department of Education applied for and received a waiver from the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) law, allowing for a better, fairer, more accurate and supportive accountability system. MDE was awarded a \$45 million Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge grant to further develop and strengthen early education efforts. The department was also awarded a \$28.2 Federal Public Charter Schools grant to design and implement high-quality charter schools.

A respected educator throughout her profession and across partisan lines, Commissioner Cassellius was critical in passing new alternative licensure; principal and teacher evaluation laws; as well as increased funding for PK-12 education; legislation ensuring a sharp, statewide focus on every child reading well by 3rd grade; and expanded access to quality early childhood education. Her reputation as an innovative problem solver can be seen within MDE where Dr. Cassellius has worked with employees to examine every aspect of department operations to ensure the state is providing the best service possible for Minnesota families, educators and students.

Since 1990, in her career as a paraprofessional, classroom teacher, administrator and superintendent in school systems both in Minnesota and Tennessee, Dr. Brenda Cassellius led reform, redesign and change efforts that put students first, focused on achievement, and have resulted in better outcomes for all students. Dr. Cassellius believes that change can happen quickly if it is purposeful, collaborative, and grounded in effective strategies.

Dr. Cassellius was most recently the Superintendent of the East Metro Integration District, where she led an achievement agenda with the 10 district superintendents. Previously, as an Associate Superintendent in the Minneapolis Public Schools, she was responsible for the implementation of the Minneapolis Secondary Redesign. As the Academic Superintendent of Middle Schools in Memphis, Tennessee, Dr. Cassellius was responsible for middle school and district reforms that led to accelerated gains, the narrowing of achievement gaps among students in Memphis, and the end to corporal punishment.

Currently, Dr. Cassellius is the tenth most senior chief state school officer in the nation and sits on the CCSSO Board of Directors.

