

# DR. BRENDA CASSELLIUS

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## EDUCATION

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- Ed. D, Leadership and Policy, University of Memphis, Memphis, TN, 2007
- Education Specialist, Secondary Administration, University of St. Thomas, St. Paul, MN, 1995
- Master of Arts, Secondary Education, University of St. Thomas, St. Paul, MN, 1991
- Bachelor of Arts, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN, 1989
- Minnesota Teacher Endorsement, University of St. Thomas, 1991
- Minnesota Secondary Principal Endorsement, University of St. Thomas, 1995
- Minnesota Superintendent Endorsement, University of St. Thomas, 2007
- Tennessee Administrator Certification, 2004
- Harvard Public Education Leadership Project (PELP), 2004/2006/2009
- Harvard Leadership, Transforming High Schools for Instruction, 2008

## EXPERIENCE

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### **Commissioner of Education**

State of Minnesota

2011- 2019

- Responsible for 837,000 students in the State of Minnesota
- Led state and national policy development
- Oversaw and administered eighteen billion-dollar biennial budget. Overhauled MN state per pupil basic, special education, integration and achievement gap funding formulas. Extended ELL funding from five to seven years. Created new American Indian Revenue. Paid back schools two billion that was borrowed and invested an additional two billion.
- Oversaw administration of the Minnesota State Department of Education
- Oversaw state academic standards, school support, federal programs, food nutrition, adult basic education, special education, assessment and state, federal accountability, and support systems
- Secured and implemented the No Child Left Behind waiver and Every Student Succeeds Act through broad stakeholder engagement and collaboration
- Developed Regional Centers of Excellence for school support and continuous improvement
- Helped craft strong focus on equity and created urgency regarding closing of achievement and funding disparities through enactment of Minnesota's new World's Best Workforce law
- Funded voluntary free all-day kindergarten for all Minnesota schools
- Expanded early learning to 30,000 children statewide through targeted scholarships,

expanded Head Start, and voluntary school-based preschool

- Enacted policies that resulted in Minnesota having its' highest graduation rates on record and in every student group, with a 30% gap closure among non-white students compared to their white peers
- Created quality measures for charter schools and new evaluation for charter authorizers
- Expanded Positive Behavior Intervention System (PBIS) to 700 schools, anti-bullying training, and restorative justice as pillars of our new School Safety Center
- Strengthened our school bully laws and created a transgender toolkit for districts to create safe and welcoming environments for every student
- First in the nation to pass strict legislation which prohibits school lunch shaming practices and provided free meals to kids who qualify for reduced price meals
- Developed and implemented an alternative adult diploma for students over the age of 18

### **Superintendent of Schools**

East Metro Integration District, Maplewood, Minnesota

2010 - 2011

- Led ten school district superintendents around equity vision
- Oversaw Integration Revenue Program and two integration magnet schools
- Stewarded the public fiscal resources to ensure better outcomes for children
- Provided strategic direction to the organization and partner districts
- Partnered with business and philanthropic community
- Inspired and supported teachers and others to be their absolute best for children

### **Associate Superintendent Secondary Schools**

Minneapolis Public Schools, Minneapolis, Minnesota

2007- 2010

- Responsible for the middle and high school reform agendas which led to increases in graduation rates and academic achievement
- Supervised all secondary schools and principal performance
- Developed new principal evaluation in collaboration with leadership team
- Oversaw career and technical education programming and piloted first in the nation IB Career Certificate (IBCC) programming at two high schools
- Supervised and led the district K-12 counseling services
- Supervised Contract Alternative and Extended Learning Office
- Coordinated first-ever charter / public high school partnership- Dunwoody Vocational
- Expanded MPS Scholars early college programming with higher education partners
- Oversaw leadership and expansion of IB Programs K-12 and AVID 6-12
- Turned around two troubled high schools experiencing poor achievement and rapidly declining enrollment through reconstitution through our Fresh Start Initiative

**Middle School Academic Superintendent**

Memphis City Schools, Memphis, TN

2004 - 2007

- Responsible for the academic performance of thirty-one middle schools, directly supervise principals and achievement of 22,000 middle school children
- Organized and led district-wide Blue Ribbon Behavior Initiative K-12 to end corporal punishment and replaced it with PBIS
- Organized and led reconstitution (Fresh Start Initiative)
- Increased reading and math achievement scores for 8<sup>th</sup> grade students and closed achievements gaps substantially in both reading and math
- Organized and led the district's federal Title 1 strategic planning and application
- Participated in the superintendent's five-year academic, facility and transportation plan
- Secured several key community, business and university partnerships that accelerated teacher professional learning, principal leadership and student achievement

**Minneapolis Public Schools, Assistant Principal**

1999 - 2004

Washburn High School, Minneapolis, MN

- Organized and led high school reform, small learning communities
- Led special education programming and brought school back into compliance
- Strengthened community confidence through relationships and collaboration
- Improved systems of shared decision making among staff and parents
- Promoted school through academic excellence marketing campaign
- Served on district principal staff development team
- Served on district interest-based teacher negotiation team
- Nominated assistant principal of the year

**St. Paul Public Schools, Assistant Principal**

1995 - 1999

St. Paul, MN

- Led middle school reform from junior high to middle school model
- Instituted teacher leadership model
- Implemented interdisciplinary teaming
- Administered all aspects of the school including budgets, master scheduling, curriculum, etc.

**Social Studies Teacher / Diversity Coordinator**

1993 - 1995

Burnsville Public School, Burnsville, MN

- Led district-wide diversity initiative
- Created student-led improve troupe focused on diversity and equity
- Served on school leadership team

**Social Studies Teacher**

1991 - 1993

St. Paul Public Schools, St. Paul, MN

- Served on school leadership team
- Middle school team leader
- Principal of summer school for African-American youth

## **PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS AND BOARD MEMBERSHIP**

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- WE Charity, US Board Member (2017 – present)
- Chair/Co-Chair Minnesota P20 Council (2011 – 2019)
- Board of Directors Member, Council for Chief State School Officers (2013 – 2019)
- Board of Directors Member, Junior Achievement Upper Midwest Region (2010)
- National Middle School Association, Leadership Faculty Member (2005 – 2009)
- Service on many boards, commissions, and working groups as Commissioner of Education

## **SELECTED GRANTS, PARTNERSHIPS AND AWARDS**

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- \$45 million Race to Top Early Learning Challenge Grant (2011)
- \$45.8 million Charter School Replication Grant (2012, 2017)
- \$21.2 million Striving Readers Grant (2017)
- \$16.5 million Striving Readers Grant, Partnership, University of Memphis (2006)
- \$3.2 million Teacher Quality Enhancement Grant, Partnership, University of Memphis (2005)
- Distinguished Woman of the Year, Girl Scouts of River Valley (2015)
- Head Start Hero, Minnesota Head Start (2011)
- Friend of School Social Work (2016)
- Champions for Children Award, MN Association of Elementary Principals (2017)
- Presidential Award, MNSHAPE (2017)

## **SELECTED PROFESSIONAL PRESENTATIONS AND PUBLICATIONS**

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- Multiple weekly speaking engagements and presentations in my role as Minnesota's Commissioner of Education at the local, state and federal level on topics of educational policy, funding, equity, early learning, accountability, assessment, principal leadership and school improvement.
- National SHAPE Conference (2018)
- Leading for Equity, Aspen Institute (2017)
- Education Week, Beyond the 2016 Election (2016)
- Doctoral Cohort Leadership Team Training, San Diego State University (2009 – 2013)
- No Time to Waste: Prioritizing Actions for Middle Grades Success (2009)
- Sable Leadership Institute, Georgia (2009)
- National Middle School Assoc., Faculty Member, Institute for Middle Level Leadership (2008/2009)
- University of Minnesota Urban Leadership Conference, Maximizing our Potential for Excellence and Equity (2008)