

Education Minnesota

St. Paul teacher to lead Minnesota Department of Education

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ST. PAUL, Minnesota. Dec. 20, 2018 – Minnesota educators cheered the announcement that Gov.-elect Tim Walz has hired former St. Paul teacher and union leader Mary Cathryn Ricker to lead the Minnesota Department of Education, said Education Minnesota President Denise Specht on Thursday.

“Every teacher and education support professional is standing a little taller today because one of us – a teacher – will lead one of the largest agencies in state government,” Specht said. “This appointment signals the respect the Walz-Flanagan administration has for the professional educators who work directly with students in Minnesota’s schools.”

Specht said it was time for a highly trained, experienced classroom educator to lead on education policy in Minnesota.

“The most important relationship in public education is between a student and a compassionate educator who knows the art and science of teaching. Those relationships are the foundation on which everything else is built,” Specht said. “This commissioner will encourage the policies that strengthen those relationships and block the ones that don’t. Everyone in Minnesota will benefit from Mary Cathryn’s commitment to making schools work for all students.”

Mary Cathryn Ricker’s experience in Washington, D.C., will be a tremendous asset in her new job, Specht said.

“Public education in the United State is a three-layer cake of local, state and federal standards and mandates,” Specht said. “Mary Cathryn Ricker had experience with them all as a teacher, president of the Saint Paul Federation of Educators and the executive vice president of the national American Federation of Teachers. I cannot think of a better person to implement the federal ESSA law in Minnesota and to advocate for Congress to finally pay for its unfunded mandates.”

About Education Minnesota

Education Minnesota is the voice for professional educators and students. Education Minnesota’s members include teachers and education support professionals in Minnesota’s public school districts, faculty members at Minnesota’s community and technical colleges and University of Minnesota campuses in Duluth and Crookston, retired educators and student teachers. Education Minnesota is affiliated with the American Federation of Teachers, National Education Association and AFL-CIO.

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