



## **Northeastern Minnesota School Districts Attend Early Childhood Summit, are Invited to Apply for Kindergarten Transition Grants**

(April 2008)

Duluth, MN – The Northland Foundation recently hosted its third annual **Regional Early Childhood Summit**, held April 1<sup>st</sup> at the DECC in Duluth. More than 200 superintendents, administrators, teachers, school board members, early childhood specialists, and other community representatives from northeastern Minnesota attended (see districts below). The summit grew out of the Foundation’s ongoing early childhood work including the *Minnesota Early Childhood Initiative*, a statewide effort for young children’s well-being and school readiness, and the *Minnesota Thrive Initiative* promoting healthy social and emotional development in infants and toddlers.

The keynote speaker, **Terrie Rose, Ph.D., LP**, shared research-supported insights into the strong link between early nurturing and consistent, responsive care in a child’s first years to their brain development, school performance, and social/emotional interactions spanning a lifetime. Dr. Rose is a leader in early care and education program innovation, research, and training. She helped to create the acclaimed *BABY’S SPACE: A Place to Grow*, a model of high-quality infant and toddler care integrated with family support services.

Next, **Okokon Udo, Ph.D., CPCC**, led a discussion of techniques to understand and accept individual and cultural differences and create inclusive schools and communities. Dr. Udo is founder and president of Distinctive Leader Options, Inc., a consulting, training, and speaking firm. He is the former Executive Director of the Center for Cross Cultural Health. Dr. Udo addresses audiences around the world on diversity, leadership, and community development.

A panel discussion featuring several **Northeastern Minnesota Communities** showcased action steps and outcomes of kindergarten transition strategies they are using to smooth the way to a successful start in school for young children and their families.

Following the panel discussion, the Northland Foundation announced **\$500 grant awards are available to applicant teams who attended the Summit** in support of kindergarten transition programs. The programs must include a component on healthy social and emotional development. Participants also filled out “commitment cards” noting their intention to support early care and

education with concrete actions such as sharing what they learned with others, expanding kindergarten transition efforts in their community, and contacting legislators to support funding for early childhood.

“It’s wonderful to see educators—from district superintendents and administrators to teachers—take time from their busy schedules to spend a day focused on early childhood,” said Lynn Haglin, Northland Foundation Vice President/KIDS PLUS Director. “They are joining early care and education specialists in understanding and responding to the fact that, young children’s experiences at home, in child care, and in preschool directly impact success in kindergarten and beyond,” concluded Haglin.

The following school districts sent teams of educators to participate in the Summit.

- Aitkin
- Barnum
- Carlton
- CITS Students
- Chisholm/Mt Iron/Buhl
- Cloquet
- Duluth
- Ely
- Esko
- Eveleth
- Floodwood
- Hermantown
- Hibbing
- Hill City
- Itasca County Early Childhood (Grand Rapids, Deer River, Coleraine, Nashwauk/Keewatin)
- McGregor
- Mesabi East
- Moose Lake
- North Shore Community School
- Proctor
- Silver Bay
- St. Louis County Schools
- Virginia

In addition to the Northland Foundation, event sponsors were The McKnight Foundation, the Blandin Foundation, St. Mary’s Duluth Clinic Health System, Otto Bremer Foundation, and Unicef.



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