

## Dr. Brenda Cassellius, servant of the community

Written by

Thursday, 30 May 2013 14:00

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Dr. Brenda Cassellius made history when she became the first African American Commissioner for Education for the state of Minnesota. She went through many struggles before she earned the top honor of the highest educational position in the state. She went through poverty, racial discrimination, and was even a single mother. Through it all, she believed and proved that with a good education, everything is possible.

WE WIN Institute students studied the life and accomplishments of this great African American. They learned about her early beginnings, the struggles she went through in her life and how education played a role to the success in her life.

Students worked together to write an essay about Dr. Cassellius, then they created an informational board that chronicled the accomplishments of her life, and culminated the activity by creating a life-size mannequin of the education commissioner.

The children were honored to present her life to Dr. Cassellius in person at a program presented at WE WIN Institute. They shared with the commissioner the African rituals that they do at WE WIN, African dance and drum, and the story of her life. Dr. Brenda Cassellius was humbled and grateful for the honor bestowed upon her. She hugged the children and told them that she was working with Governor Mark Dayton to put resources behind programs like WE WIN Institute that was helping children learn about their rich culture and history while simultaneously learning reading, writing and mathematics.

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By Lizzy Voravong, Diamond Diggs and Teresa Baker



Our essay is about Dr. Brenda Cassellius. She was born in Minnesota. Having many struggles in her life, education was the key to her success. She is now the Commissioner of the Minnesota Department of Education.

Dr. Cassellius was born in 1967 in the state of Minnesota. Her family had many struggles because of poverty. She moved several times in her childhood. In high school she attended Richfield High. She went to several universities, which included the University of Minnesota, and the University of St. Thomas.

Dr. Cassellius believes that the ticket to her success was education and her teachers. She worked hard because her teachers saw something in her that she didn't see in herself.

Commissioner Cassellius walked away from a full scholarship at Gustavus Adolphus College. Ms. Brenda started out at this college but after being called a racial slur while walking down the street in St. Peter, she walked away from her full ride scholarship and went to study at the University of Minnesota, paying her tuition on her own, with the assistance of college grants. Commissioner Cassellius earned her teaching license.

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