



PRESS RELEASE -- FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Contact: Shannon Peterson, Assistant Director
Phone: 651-464-0771 / E-mail: speterson@lakesinternational.org
www.lakesinternational.org

Local Schools' Partnership Honored at National Conference

Forest Lake, MN –A partnership program between Lakes International Language Academy (LILA) and Forest Lake Area Schools (FLAS) was recently chosen as a national best cooperative practice for the second time in two years. The Language Continuation Program developed jointly by LILA and FLAS began five years ago at Southwest Junior High School (SWJH).

A national panel of leaders in education innovation conducted a nationwide search to find the most promising and effective collaborative practices between charter and traditional public schools. Selected practices had to show strong originality, inventiveness and the ability to replicate. The best submissions were selected for presentation at a conference in Denver, CO, on November 5. Two representatives from LILA participated in the conference.

Melissa Martyr-Wagner, a LILA founding board member and current LILA Foundation Director, and Julie Lundgren, LILA CFO and also a founding board member, gave a presentation sharing the schools' collaborative effort.

LILA School Director Cam Hedlund said, "Over the past five years, our partnership has transcended the usual tensions common between charter schools and traditional districts. Our mutual focus on what's best for kids has allowed cooperation to prevail."

LILA is a tuition-free public elementary and International Baccalaureate World School teaching grades K to 6 in a Spanish or Mandarin Chinese immersion environment. The Language Continuation Program allows LILA graduates to maintain and further develop their near-native language proficiency by taking two to three courses in various subjects, all taught in Spanish. This year at SWJH, Continuation Program participants receive instruction in Spanish in Science, Geography/History (Social Studies), and Spanish Cultural Studies.

The two districts have begun planning for the addition of Mandarin Chinese to the Language Continuation Program, in anticipation of the first Chinese-speaking LILA alumni, due to begin at SWJH in 2019.

246 11th Avenue Southeast, Forest Lake, Minnesota 55025
651.464.0771 (phone) www.lakesinternational.org 651.464.4429 (fax)

The LILA District 4116-FLAS District 831 partnership was the only practice chosen from Minnesota.

The conference was made possible through a grant by Ohio Grantmakers Forum and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

Learn more about LILA's award-winning programs and teachers; call 651-464-0771 to join upcoming tours on Wednesday, Nov. 14 and Tuesday, Nov 27.

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