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## NEWS FROM THE MINNEAPOLIS PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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Tel: 612.668.0230 – Fax: 612.668.0235  
807 NE Broadway, Minneapolis, MN 55413-2398  
[www.mpls.k12.mn.us](http://www.mpls.k12.mn.us)

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#### **MEDIA CONTACTS:**

Rachel R. Hicks  
Assistant Director of Media Relations/Public Affairs  
612.668.0227  
[rachel.hicks@mpls.k12.mn.us](mailto:rachel.hicks@mpls.k12.mn.us)

Carolyn Smallwood  
Way to Grow, Executive Director  
612.874.4740  
[CSmallwood@mplswayatogrow.org](mailto:CSmallwood@mplswayatogrow.org)

## **Minneapolis Public Schools and Way to Grow announce “Great by 8”**

**MINNEAPOLIS** – The Minneapolis Public Schools and Way to Grow, an early learning program serving children from prenatal through kindergarten age, announce “Great by 8,” a pilot program that increases Way to Grow’s services to include children from kindergarten to third grade or age 8.

The partnership expands a long-term existing collaboration between MPS and Way to Grow. The Minneapolis Public Schools provide School Readiness funding and Early Childhood Family Education services to Way to Grow, which has been one of the preeminent early learning programs in the Twin Cities for over 20 years. In addition, Way to Grow has been an active member of the Minneapolis School Readiness Collaborative and is working with MPS and other community partners to develop the Northside Achievement Zone (NAZ).

By serving children during these critical first eight years, Way to Grow and MPS can lay the groundwork for success in school and life, ultimately helping to end cyclical poverty and create an educated work force. Studies show that a child’s third-grade literacy scores can accurately predict the chances that the child will graduate from high school, go to college, earn a better income or go to jail.

“Great by 8” will bring Way to Grow’s proven pre-k programming into the Minneapolis Public Schools with the goal of expanding the traditional classroom approach and having all students successfully reading at the appropriate grade level. “This program delivers focused resources to students who are the most isolated and most at-risk,” said Carolyn Smallwood, executive director of Way to Grow.

“We are excited to partner with Way to Grow and provide the educational support our school children all need and deserve. Together we know we can achieve more,” said MPS Superintendent Bernadeia Johnson.

Way to Grow is currently supporting 40 MPS students in the pilot program. The participants of the pilot were selected based on their need for additional academic and family support. Participants receive weekly home visits from a family educator, focusing on teaching emerging literacy skills and increasing parental involvement in the child’s school life. The child’s teachers will work in tandem with Way to Grow family educators to customize education plans so that each child’s needs can be met. Families will also be connected with vital resources to support a healthy and stable home life so that students can focus on their education. Funding for the pilot is provided by Way to Grow.

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The pilot is part of a multilayered approach by MPS to enhance children's successful transition into MPS kindergartens and to strengthen the alignment of MPS pre-K to grade three services, including parent engagement and education supports, early childhood curriculum, assessment and professional development. The pilot will be followed, analyzed and evaluated to determine the overall success of the program.

Way to Grow is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit. For more information please visit [www.mplswtg.org](http://www.mplswtg.org).

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