

PRESS RELEASE
NEVADA ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL BOARDS
November 17, 2008

Nevada Association of School Boards Presents
2008 Awards, Recognizes Past Presidents, and Elects New Officers

On Saturday, November 15, at its Annual Conference held in Reno at the Airport Plaza Hotel & Conference Center, the Nevada Association of School Boards recognized the achievements and contributions of legislators, school board members, administrators, and others for 2008 and elected new officers for the Association.

The Association also celebrated its 45th birthday and honored its first formally elected President, Bernard Carter from White Pine County School District who served in 1969-70. Mr. Carter, now 83, traveled from his residence in Granbury, Texas, to attend the Conference. Other past presidents honored were: Sheila Moulton [2006-07], Clark; Norm Scoggin [2005-06], Carson City; Curt Chapman [2004-05], Storey; Joan Westover [2003-04], Lander; Anne Loring [2002-03], Washoe; Murry Whipple [2001-02], Lincoln; Ruth Johnson [1999-2000], Clark; and Don Forrester [1997-98], Douglas.

Departing school board members from around the State were also recognized. Twenty-nine school board members who will be leaving their local boards from across Nevada's seventeen counties represent a total of 249 years of service to children, educational staff, and their communities. A special moment of silence honored Washoe County Trustee Lezlie Porter, deceased July 2008, after fourteen years of service.

The Association also recognized Assemblywoman Debbie Smith as its first "Honorary Member." Assemblywoman Smith formerly served as a school board member in Lander County School District. In addition, during her tenure in the Nevada Legislature she has served as co-chair of the Assembly Committee on Education and chair of the K-12 Budget Subcommittee of the Assembly Committee on Ways and Means. The Association's award recognized Assemblywoman Smith's invaluable contributions to the schools and children of Nevada.

The Association honored Senator William J. Raggio as a "Special Friend" in appreciation of his service in the Nevada Legislature for nine Special and eighteen regular Sessions and for his long-standing support of K-12 public education.

In addition, the Association recognized six administrators from Title I schools that had demonstrated extraordinary growth in student learning and achievement during the 2007-2008 school year. Included in this exceptional group of school leaders were:

Valerie Dockery	Principal, Bordewich Bray Elementary School	Carson City
Laura Petersen	Principal, Lois Allen Elementary School	Washoe
Pete Peterson	Principal, Panaca Elementary School	Lincoln
Lisa Primas	Principal, Paul Culley Empowerment School	Clark
Tim Wombaker	Principal, Mt. Charleston Elementary School	Nye
Ben Zunino	Superintendent/Principal Crescent Valley Elementary School	Eureka

2008 Awards and their recipients include:

Distinguished Service Award, K-12 Public Education Advocacy Organization—Nevadans for Quality Education

Nevadans for Quality Education (NQE) is a grass roots organization formed by a group of parents from Clark County who were disillusioned after the 2003 Session of the Nevada Legislature during which funds for K-12 public education were held hostage. During the intervening years, NQE has advocated for education-friendly legislation, has opposed unfunded mandates, and supported full-day kindergarten for Nevada children. While NQE began as a Clark County based organization, in 2005 the group began a serious effort to travel to counties throughout the State and broaden the basis of its support for K-12 issues. NQE is a respected, proactive watchdog not-for-profit organization that is part of the overall partnership to improve K-12 education in Nevada. As an organization, NAQ provides a critical statewide umbrella for everyone who is deeply concerned about K-12 public education.

Distinguished Service Award, Local School Board—Storey County School District Board of Trustees

The school board members in Storey County care about children and ensuring that student achievement is the focus of the board and community they serve. It was exciting to see their work in involving the whole community to provide a football field to help bring this all-important facility to their students. Often, these school board members have sacrificed their family responsibilities and personal lives to the students they serve. They have never complained but have just done what needed to be done to move their District to a higher educational level. Members of the Storey County School District Board of Trustees are all about their students and their historical community.

Executive Director’s Award for Contributions to Nevada School Districts and the Association—Dr. Jane Nichols, Vice Chancellor for Student and Academic Affairs, Nevada System of Higher Education

Over the years, Dr. Jane Nichols has worked consistently to communicate with school board members, superintendents, and others in the K-12 public school community to bring together constituencies who can work together to make a difference in Nevada’s high school graduation and college-going rates. Dr. Nichols has appeared side by side with K-12 public school advocates in the legislative setting. She has shown her determination to provide accurate, updated data and evidence that Nevadans can use to make a difference in improving the status quo. Dr. Nichols exemplifies excellence in effective communication and outreach efforts. At a time when there is great need for K-12 and higher education to work closely together and collaborate on issues of mutual concern, Dr. Nichols serves as an excellent messenger and facilitator.

Leadership Award, Individual School Board Member—John Seeliger, Humboldt County School District

Mr. Seeliger has been a member of the Humboldt County School District Board of Trustees for more than ten years. He oversees executive staff reviews. In this role, he has developed the programs and qualified the results to allow his board colleagues to view the results with confidence and understanding. He is the board's strongest voice for class size reduction and works diligently to keep state funding in place for schools. His priorities are clear cut and his leadership and experience enable him to keep available funding concentrated on classroom instruction.

NASB Director's Award, Director of the Year—Carolyn Edwards, Clark County School District

Ms. Edwards has assumed the position of NASB Director with great diligence and persistence. Although she represents Clark County, she has been open to learn the needs and work of all the school districts in the State. She has worked with another Director on the issue of school land use and proposed a strategy that may result in the potential for eventual increased funding for K-12 public education. She is informed and diligent in her presentations and inquiries. Her desire is to expand her knowledge about national, regional, and local issues impacting K-12 public education and collaborate with others so that we can mobilize a unified, statewide effort to tackle these important issues.

NASB Officer of the Year—Irene Chachas, White Pine County School District

Ms. Chachas has completed two terms as a school board trustee. She has represented the White Pine board at numerous meetings and endless school activities, while being an instrumental force in maintaining arts in the schools. Her participation in NASB has brought to the White Pine board a perspective that has enabled them to work in concert with other school boards from around the State. One of Ms. Chachas' greatest strengths is her ability to advocate for those she serves to ensure that all children have the resources they need to learn and achieve.

NASB Distinguished Service Award, New School Board Member—Shelly Noble, Humboldt County School District

Ms. Noble has distinguished herself as an informed, hardworking member of the Humboldt Board of Trustees. She takes on the added challenges of outside committee work and monitors and reports to the Board on State legislative issues. She visits schools and classrooms often and regularly. She is a trusted contact for teachers and other staff alike. She is a staunch advocate for the clear delineation of roles and responsibilities of the board and of the superintendent. Her deliberations as a board member are characterized by a heartfelt need to enhance public trust and confidence in K-12 education.

***NASB Distinguished Service Award, Veteran School Board Member—
Linda Schrempp, Humboldt County School District***

Ms. Schrempp has been a member of the Humboldt County School District Board of Trustees for the past twenty-one years. During that time, she has worked with five superintendents and provided board leadership that built two new schools and expanded Lowry High School. During her tenure, she has congratulated more than 12,000 high school students on their graduation. She is well known for her strong commitment to education as well as to the children and teachers of the community. She will be long-remembered as a champion of K-12 public education and the children who attend the schools in Humboldt County School District.

***School Administrator of the Year—Lisa Primas, Principal, Paul
Culley Empowerment School, Clark County School District***

Ms. Primas has a commitment to high expectations for all students and quality programs. Her empathy for students, staff, and community coupled with her overall energy, enthusiasm, and dedication truly epitomizes outstanding educational leadership. In 2006, she accepted the challenge of becoming principal for the newly formed Paul Culley Empowerment School, including reconstituting all personnel, revising the academic program, elevating behavioral expectations, and transforming the vision of a school in need of improvement. Under her leadership and with classroom instruction focused more laser-like on learning, children at Cully have shown 20%-28% increases in math and reading competency. As an innovator and a humanitarian, Ms. Primas inspires her "community of learners" to be the best they can be and to achieve together what they could not achieve alone. Paul Culley Empowerment School has just been named one of Nevada's two Distinguished Title I Schools for 2007-2008.

***School Administrator of the Year—Melinda Johnson, Yerington
Elementary School, Lyon County School District***

Ms. Johnson has guided a school that was for three years designated as "in need of improvement" to an exemplary status in 2007-2008. She and the staff at Yerington Elementary School developed a successful Pyramid of Interventions that, over the course of a four-year implementation took children to new levels of learning and achievement. One of the staff at the school states, "Melinda Johnson is an incredible administrator. She consistently uses data to drive school improvement decisions instead of the current new thing. She has never faltered in her dedication to student intervention programs that match what students need. The progress at our school is a direct result of her leadership, dedication, and passion for education."

***Superintendent of the Year—Dr. Walt Rulffes, Clark County School
District***

Over the last year, Dr. Rulffes' leadership of the Clark County School District has emphasized achievement of the mission and values established by the Board of Trustees. He has a long and proven history as a top-notch financial manager, an expertise that has been vital to CCSD efforts to address revenue shortfalls in 2007-2008. He is a strong academic leader. During the last year, Dr. Rulffes has initiated a number of new academic approaches that are designed to improve

student achievement and reduce the dropout rate. These include an increased focus on career and technical education, expansion of empowerment schools, the 21st Century Curriculum, the purchase of a new parent communication tool, and standardized end of semester algebra and geometry exams. The Clark County School District has achieved Adequate Yearly Progress two consecutive years and is the only school district among the nation's ten largest school districts to be able to make this claim. Dr. Rulffes has collaborated with Nevada System of Higher Education Chancellor Jim Rogers to develop standards and improve instruction in high school so that fewer students will need remediation after their high school graduation. Dr. Rulffes has been instrumental in guiding the District in preparation of a new strategic plan that will move CCSD well into the 21st century. Despite the challenges and the pressures confronting his superintendency, Dr. Rulffes comports himself with confidence, expertise, grace, respect, and humor. He is a model superintendent.

NASB Leadership Award, School Board of the Year—Clark County School District Board of Trustees

The Clark County School District Board of Trustees has made significant accomplishments during the 2007-2008 school year, achievements which have clearly led to higher student achievement and in the identification of areas that need additional focus. None of the other ten largest school districts in the USA have made Adequate Yearly Progress once; children in CCSD have achieved Adequate Yearly Progress two consecutive years. Over the most recent two years, the Board of Trustees has developed an audit committee to ensure that the financial transactions of the District are open, honest, and fiscally responsible. The Board has adopted a Quality Assurance Framework which directly measures the progress of students in terms of their achievement at all grade levels. The Framework uses criteria that directly address the goals set by the Board for student achievement. This framework is also used in the evaluation of the Superintendent. Through policy governance, the board has given direction to the Superintendent with one voice. In addition to leadership within Clark County, several members of the Board of Trustees have contributed to the work of the Nevada Association of School Boards, specifically the development of the Association's Strategic Action and Business Plan. The Board of Trustees exemplifies leadership that focuses on student achievement.

The Association elected new officers for 2009:

President—Irene Chachas, White Pine County School District;

President Elect—Jim Lemaire, Carson City School District;

Vice President—Christine Miller, Storey School District; and

Legislative Chair—Carolyn Edwards, Clark County School District.

For questions, please contact Dr. Dotty Merrill, Executive Director, Nevada Association of School Boards, 775/443-5988.