



2015 State Superintendent OF THE Year Forum

Leadership FOR Change

*The Superintendent as
Education's Thought Leader
November 2015 • Washington, D.C.*

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“Our nations’ superintendents have the moral obligation to be the voice for the voiceless ... we need to celebrate and champion the many successes of our public schools and we need to be honest about our ongoing challenges. Your commitment to act with courage to take on these challenges is essential ... especially for our minority children and children in poverty giving families a shot at breaking the generational cycle of poverty that exists in so many corners of our great nation.

David Schuler, AASA president

“Superintendents serving as instructional leaders are essential to responding with urgency to close the achievement gap. We (together) have to move this country to a point that we are talking about schools ... and elevate examples of success in our country.

John King, incoming U.S. Secretary of Education

“Public education is the foundation of our country. 50 million students that we touch every day requires that we look really closely at what we do. Who do we see when we make policy? Draw a line from policy to that face ... 50 million lines!

Phillip D. Lanoue, AASA 2015 National Superintendent of the Year

Introduction

AASA, The School Superintendents Association, is committed to annually recognizing the state superintendents of the year and engaging them in a policy forum designed to expand participant knowledge, while providing them with the opportunity to influence the ongoing legislative and policy process in Washington, D.C. Scheduled during a time when intense deliberation was underway on the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), the forum, made possible by the generous sponsorship of Aramark and VALIC, concentrated on high profile issues facing public school superintendents including federal education policy, personalized learning, digital instruction, superintendent leadership and equity in education.

The forum commenced with presentations by incoming U.S. Secretary of Education John King and AASA President David Schuler which celebrated the accomplishments of the superintendents of the year, and gave special recognition to the National Superintendent of the Year, Dr. Phillip D. Lanoue.

This publication summarizes the important elements of the forum, while emphasizing the imperatives for action for school district leaders. The text is augmented with several reference listings for additional details on specific topics and presenters.

“The superintendents with us tonight have been recognized by their peers and were selected by their states to be considered for National Superintendent of the Year. They have overcome obstacles and adversity, and persevered in spite of a challenging economy and contentious political climate.

*Daniel A. Domenech, AASA
executive director*

Personalized Learning

Reflecting on the legacy of Horace Mann, Dr. Domenech challenged the superintendents to think differently about the organization of schools through the creation of multiple pathways to career and college readiness. He recommended we no longer rely on students' chronological age as the primary method of structuring schools; and he advocated for a blended learning model, that embraces the strength of technology and personalized learning, to give students responsibility for their own learning while still retaining the basic requirements. Dr. Domenech further encouraged participants to become active in the national conversation on personalized learning, to correct the limitations of our present organizational structure and better support the aspirations of students

and parents. Citing model schools such as Innovations Early College High School in Salt Lake City, Utah, Dr. Domenech predicted that schools could finally be liberated from the “*box schools find themselves in.*” The AASA executive director further challenged the superintendents to identify the critical elements necessary for restructuring schools to support of personalized learning.

AASA president David Schuler proposed that at the heart of the redesign is the need to *redefine success* for college and career readiness with new metrics that do not depend on ACT and SAT scores as the primary predictors of success. The research shows that metrics such as attendance,

community services, co-curricular activities and identification of a career cluster are valuable correlates for predicting career and college readiness. Rethinking these metrics also broadens the definition of success for special education students. President Schuler joined with others in proposing a redesign

“When you look at our schools, we are still organized in the same way we were in the 19th century ... it makes no sense at all.

*Daniel A. Domenech,
AASA executive director*

that embraces early college enrollment, with a clear path towards high school graduation with an associate degree or the completion of relevant, career or college-ready coursework.

Some of the essential themes discussed as pathways to redesign included:

- Better use of classroom time to provide students with the opportunities to demonstrate content proficiency through a test-out pathway, and additional time to improve in their areas of challenge;
- Enabling students to assume ownership of their personalized learning plans, by moving away from an age-driven school structure;
- Providing untethered technology access to allow instruction in and out of the traditional school day and support anyplace/anytime learning;
- Redefining the role of the teacher from lecturer to manager of the students' personalized learning plans, while still promoting each student's responsibility for his or her own growth; and
- Engage active superintendents in developing effective accountability efforts that monitor compliance with content standards, while still promoting student responsibility for learning management.

Participants were asked to candidly reflect on the impediments to realizing the potential of personalized learning. The state superintendents shared these as current challenges:

- Lack of a commonly agreed upon definition of personalized learning;
- The need for clear strategies for obtaining parental/community/legislature buy-in and understanding of the new pathways;
- The need to engage community college and university partners in mutually beneficial partnerships;
- Community-wide digital access;
- Fiscal realignment;
- Managing the clash between present accountability systems and those that would be required under personalized learning;
- Clear identification of the research-based metrics associated with the personalized learning pathway; and
- Professional development of teachers necessary to fully implement personalized learning pathways.

Finally, Dr. Domenech speculated that it is imperative that an ALEC-like organization (American Legislative Exchange Council) at both the state and federal level must be undertaken to influence the changes necessary to allow personalized learning to reach its potential.

Resources

ALEC: <http://www.alec.org/publication/report-card-on-american-education/>

Horace Mann League: <http://www.hmleague.org/>

Innovations Early College High School:
<http://www.innovationshigh.org>

“Beyond Measure” documentary film:
<http://beyondmeasurefilm.com/>

Selected Articles on Personalized Learning:
<http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2014/10/22/09pl-overview.h34.html>
<http://edglossary.org/personalized-learning/>
<http://www.iste.org/handlers/ProductAttachment.ashx?ProductID=3122&Type=Download>
<http://educationnext.org/personalization-future-learning/>

Federal Education Policy

The Superintendent of the Year Forum was fortuitously scheduled as the House-Senate Conference Committee was meeting to consider the bipartisan reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). Forum participants learned about the details of the reauthorization from White House Deputy

Assistant to President Obama, Roberto Rodriquez and Domestic Policy Council Senior Policy Advisor, Mario Cardona. Reflections were offered on the evolution of ESEA with particular emphasis on potential changes to its current iteration - the 13-year old No Child Left Behind.

Mr. Rodriquez clearly indicated the administration's support of the bipartisan bill. He also expressed deep concern for dropouts, indicating that *half to three-quarters of dropouts can be traced back to fewer than 1,000 American high schools*. He further emphasized that during the remainder of his term, President Obama will focus on STEM and the redesign of America's outdated high school model. Mr. Cardona shared his perspective that a reauthorized ESEA needs to focus on the civil rights legacy defined by high quality preschool, right-sized assessments, correct investment in evidence-based competitive programs and greater community involvement.

Administration representatives then engaged the superintendents in a candid review of some of the essential underlying themes of the reauthorization including, but not limited to, the intent to reduce the testing burden; con-

“We want to recalibrate our system of education to higher standards ... (Yet) less than 10 cents of each dollar is invested in our students

*White House Deputy
Assistant to the President,
Roberto Rodriquez*

tinued emphasis on disaggregation of data; emphasis on measurable annual objectives and targets; realignment of the responsibilities of the ED (U.S. Department of Education), SEA (State Educational Agencies) and LEA's (Local Education Agencies); continued need to report graduation rates; mandatory interventions by LEA's for schools persistently performing in bottom 5%; renewed emphasis on reporting on transient rates; pilot programs with 50 districts allowing for pooling of certain funds according to a weighted formula; Rural Education Fund reauthorization; and retaining of maintenance of effort.

AASA's Assistant Director of Policy and Advocacy Sasha Pudelski, who co-chairs the National Coalition for Public Education, provided an overview of the organized opposition of vouchers and Title I portability in the proposal. There were several votes in the Senate to allow Title I funds to flow to private schools, all of which were defeated. In addition, she reviewed the reauthorization of the Rural Education Achievement Program and the changes AASA advocated to be made to the program. She also discussed new provisions pertaining to the education of students in foster care, specifically the right of students in foster care to remain in their school of origin and a requirement for districts to determine how transportation to and from school would be managed for these students.

The session was highlighted by the visit from Georgia Senator Johnny Isakson - member of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee, an ESEA reauthorization conferee and one of the original authors of NCLB with the late Senator Ted Kennedy. Senator Isakson expressed cautious optimism for the successful reauthorization. He reflected back to the enactment of NCLB, when he predicted (along with his colleague Senator Ted Kennedy) that maintaining AYP for more than 7 years would turn a positive to a negative. The conviction of his message is clearly communicated in his own words:

The reauthorization language will ... maintain disaggregation as a student focus; reduce the focus on testing; we aren't going to go for waivers any longer; we are going to let you run your education without having to get a waiver every time you turn around; we are ending the Common Core argument ... this bill does not embrace the Common Core as a foundation, that's up to the local system; the Federal government is not going to mandate anything that is patently clear with no wiggle room and should help you with what you need to do in your district without the federal government telling you what to do."

Senator Johnny Isakson (R) Georgia

The session concluded with a series of roundtable briefings on technology/E-Rate, federal budget appropriations and rural education.

Resources

House-Senate Conference Committee: <http://edworkforce.house.gov/news/documentsingle.aspx?DocumentID=399784>

White House Domestic Policy Council:
<https://www.whitehouse.gov/administration/eop/dpc>
<https://www.whitehouse.gov/issues/education>

National Coalition for Public Education: https://cdn-files.nsba.org/s3fs-public/file/2015-03-26%20NCPE_Voucher_Senate_Budget_letter.pdf?8NxYuomjq1x1rVLripva8Ska2hEvpvYM

Senator Johnny Isakson on reauthorization: <http://www.isakson.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/issue-statements?p=education>

AASA Leading Edge Legislative Blog:
<http://aasa.org/aasablog.aspx?id=38501&blogid=286>

AASA Policy and Advocacy Webinars:
<http://aasa.org/content.aspx?id=36160>

AASA Policy and Legislation Related Websites:
<http://aasa.org/Content.aspx?id=854>

Dr. Phillip D. Lanoue

National Superintendent of the Year

*It's not what superintendents say,
but it's what they do ...*

Dr. Lanoue began by acknowledging that the work of superintendents must change if they are going to successfully maneuver their way through accountability. Reflecting on the progress of this change, he questioned if the change we see is simply a veneer or if it is really substantially different? Unless leadership fundamentally embraces changing the expectations for today's students, they will be marginalized.

“Across this country there are inconsistencies in leadership ... Kids are marginalized because of (low) expectations.”

*Dr. Phillip D. Lanoue,
Superintendent, Clarke
County School District (GA)*

Central in his thesis is the need to provide full digital access, not simply the inadequate proxy often labeled as blended access. According to Dr. Lanoue, “The exponential growth of technology has made what was scarce abundant.” This requires a change from assessments dominated by tests to demonstrations of true proficiency. With untethered learning, Dr. Lanoue believes the teacher is freed from the front of the room and students are afforded 24/7 access to learning through technology.

Dr. Lanoue advocated for taking risks with learning, such as providing International Baccalaureate for all students; enabling second language proficiency by 6th grade; providing arts education for all; and allowing free college enrollment as early as age 14, with resultant changes in needed graduation requirements to reflect dual credit, early college enrollment.

Fundamental to accomplishing this change is the need to prepare teachers with *deliberative experiences*. This requires close attention to the pipeline of incoming new teachers. We must ensure that as part of their education and

experiences, student teachers are practicing new skills and taking courses in the very schools where they will one day work. In turn, it is essential that the faculty preparing our students resides in the districts where they teach.

The health and well-being of children is directly associated with closing the achievement gap. Failure of communities to prioritize this issue will disable efforts to eliminate the performance gap. Dr. Lanoue expressed his belief that it is an imperative to build true capacity to eliminate the gap between black and white students. Additionally, the same level of commitment towards improving capacity and performance must be given to special education students.

Underpinning Dr. Lanoue's entire reform plan is an unwavering commitment to be true to his district's mission, vision and belief statements. The National Superintendent of the Year discussed that every district should be held accountable to this as well. He further suggested that with frequent monitoring of district actions and activities - as they align to the mission, vision and belief statements - superintendents can end programs that they know do not work. This commitment, he concluded, must be the non-negotiables that outline the work of a superintendent.


Dr. Lanoue summarized his remarks with the following tenants as examples of what Yesterday's Leaders did and what Tomorrow's Leaders must do:

Yesterday's Leaders:

- develop policies to safeguard the system
- inform leaders and hold them accountable
- set the agenda for board meetings
- monitor finance and operations
- allocate human resources
- maintain and lead the current system
- believe all students can learn
- believe decision-making is vertical
- believe conversations identify problems
- believe the superintendent and the board are the center of the system
- believe digital tools support the current instructional models

Tomorrow's Leaders:

- develop policies to innovate the system
- inspire leaders and hold our team accountable
- set the agenda for professional learning
- monitor the strategic plan related to school performance
- advocate for human resources
- create and lead new systems
- believe all students must learn



“Kids want to be a collaborative of excellence, they want to talk to each other; they want to talk about their learning; they want to be untethered from their workplace and untethered from their school and they want the digital tools to access their learning.”

Dr. Phillip D. Lanoue

- believe decision-making is horizontal
- believe conversations solve problems
- believe the vision, mission and beliefs are the center of the system
- believe digital tools create new instructional models

At the conclusion of his remarks, Dr. Lanoue posed the following questions to his fellow State Superintendents of the Year:

- How do we most effectively engage students in managing their own learning, while monitoring it for demonstrating the necessary competencies?
- How do we shape and change the conversation at the state level and stop using state educator evaluation?
- How do we limit the number of things to focus on?
- How do we avoid mixing the identification of the most effective teachers versus the most loyal teachers?

After lengthy and interactive dialogue with the state superintendents of the year, Dr. Lanoue observed that a move from a culture of limited accountability and isolation to a culture of full accountability and collaboration is vital to an ultimate shift in thinking about what tomorrow's leader must do.

Resources

Dr. Lanoue's Presentation: <https://prezi.com/xoe7dn3d8vsl>

Lanoue Article on Principals: *New Practices for a New Day: Principal Professional Development to Support Performance Cultures in Schools* <http://www.learninglandscapes.ca/images/documents/ll-no17/zepeda.pdf>

Clarke County School District Mission, Vision and Belief Statements: <http://www.clarke.k12.ga.us/files/filesystem/visionMissionPDF.pdf>

Clarke County School District Non-Negotiables: http://www.clarke.k12.ga.us/files/filesystem/ccsd_poster_071614-2.PDF

Education Equity

Dr. David Chard, chair of National Board of Education Sciences (NBES) and dean of the School of Education and Human Development at Southern Methodist University, began the session with the provocative question, *“Do we offer fairness in the opportunities we provide to children?”* Citing the meager expenditure on R&D for education and the focus on defining equity only in terms of outputs, Dr. Chard responded to his own question by reflecting, *“We clearly do not have the political will to inform our own profession.”* Following this reflection, Dr. Chard offered three areas where progress on equity is evident.

1. We are making progress in defining effective pedagogy (the art and science of teaching) through research. Dr. Chard shared that with a clearly defined science of teaching and learning, we can prepare teachers who are better equipped to serve effectively in some of the most challenging school settings. He further shared that with a defined pedagogy, we can incorporate the programs that we know work, such as Reading First, into reform efforts like the Common Core.
2. New investments are being made to identify effective teacher preparation programs. Dr. Chard shared an announcement from the Gates foundation about the development of a southern tier schools consortium that will develop a system called U.S. Prep. This system will focus on the scientific


“According to the National Institutes of Health, we spend \$94 per person per year for research and development on health; (in comparison) we spend \$1.71 per person per year on research and development on education.”

*Dr. David Chard, chair,
National Board of Education
Sciences*

effects of teacher training selection and preparation. Dr. Chard reflected that currently we are not successfully recruiting students into teacher education. With the work of organizations like the Gates Foundation, we can work to attract a high quality of people to the education profession. Dr. Chard also shared that the best research on teacher effectiveness dates back to the 1970s.

3. The *What Works Clearinghouse* provides evidence about the importance of effective principals in the child's success trajectory. With this research, we are beginning to understand the conditions of the work. Because one bad year can change the trajectory of a child's achievement in school, we know that a strong, effective principal is essential.

Citing *New York Times* contributor Eduard Porter, Dr. Chard argued the reality is that the education gap between the rich and the poor is widening. Yet community-based programs (such as the Collective Impact Model from West Dallas) hold promise for better understanding how community services can work together to share databases, with a focus on improving school performance for underserved students.



“Our role is to paint the picture of all education experiences from birth to death. We need the data to demonstrate the role; without that picture, we do not have the prism to look at the issue of equity.”

Dr. Peggy G. Carr, acting commissioner, National Center for Education Statistics

Dr. Chard concluded by referring to the pioneering work of surgeon Atul Gawande, as outlined in his book *The Checklist Manifesto*. Gawande suggests that the most complex of activities can be better understood by employing checklists of non-negotiables that help define the tasks facing individuals and the necessary interactions needed to achieve those tasks. While simple in concept, Chard suggests the development of such checklists can bring clarity to complex and highly charged issues such as improving equity in education.

The final speaker of the forum was Dr. Peggy G. Carr, acting commissioner of the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). While reviewing the role of NCES and its relationship to Institute for Education Sciences (IES), the focus quickly changed the discussion of fairness and equity

issues. The recent decline in National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) scores and matters uncovered by the disaggregation of these data and other data collected by her agency began to dominate the conversation. The discussion was wide-ranging, covering uneven distribution of highly qualified teachers, disproportionality, grade retention and graduation rates. Each of these matters carries particular implications and reveals ethnic, gender and socio-economic differences in the data.

Dr. Carr was particularly circumspect concerning the recent drop in NAEP math scores and the 2017 scheduled use of technology in administering NAEP. While no definitive explanation is in hand for the recent math score decline, Dr. Carr suggested that the bottom 10% suffered the greatest loss. Speculation abounds that the Common Core may have played a role in realigning certain curriculum elements, while failing to adjust the assessments. With respect to the transition from “paper and pencil tests” to the use of technology, the assumption has been made that the digital divide will be resolved by 2017, along with potentially troubling issues like teacher familiarity with managing assessments using technology, familiarity with specific devices, the cognitive overload encountered by ELL and disabled students, and the unknown level of motivation required to accurately assess the students’ performance. This matter is confounded by the fact that, according to Dr. Carr, *kids that have greater technology are doing worse on pencil and paper assessments and better on technology assessments. This cuts across race and socio-economic status.*

Dr. Carr reflected on the plethora of data collection across many federal agencies and the need to better manage the use of that data for guiding education policy. While citing several notable examples from her agency that have driven the policy discussion, she advocated for greater use of coordinated data hubs to better structure necessary collaboration between the 13 data-producing federal agencies.

The acting commissioner confirmed that the continued ethnic disaggregation of data by the Department of Education was expected to continue. Dr. Carr further indicated that *the distribution of highly qualified teachers is a problem in America*. This fact is compounded by the continued disturbing reality that grade retention is male dominated, and particularly prevalent for black and Hispanic students. Disproportionality and its impact on graduation rates cannot be denied. *The good news is that graduation rates are improving; the bad news is that the improvement is not good enough.*

The session ended with a frank discussion of the use of Free and Reduced Price Lunch (FRPL) as the metric for determining poverty. Acting Commissioner Carr anticipated departing from FRPL as the proxy for poverty, while Dr. Domenech suggested the best determiner of poverty was zip code. Finding the best predictor of poverty promises to be a spirited conversation in the coming years.

Resources

Dr. Carr's Presentation: <https://www.dropbox.com/s/pw5mrsfbeamfua2/11.18.2015%20Equity%20presentation%20for%20AASA.pptx?dl=0>

National Board of Education Sciences:
<http://ies.ed.gov/director/board>

Gates Foundation – U.S. Prep: (<http://www.gatesfoundation.org/Media-Center/Press-Releases/2015/11/Teacher-Prep-Grants>)–

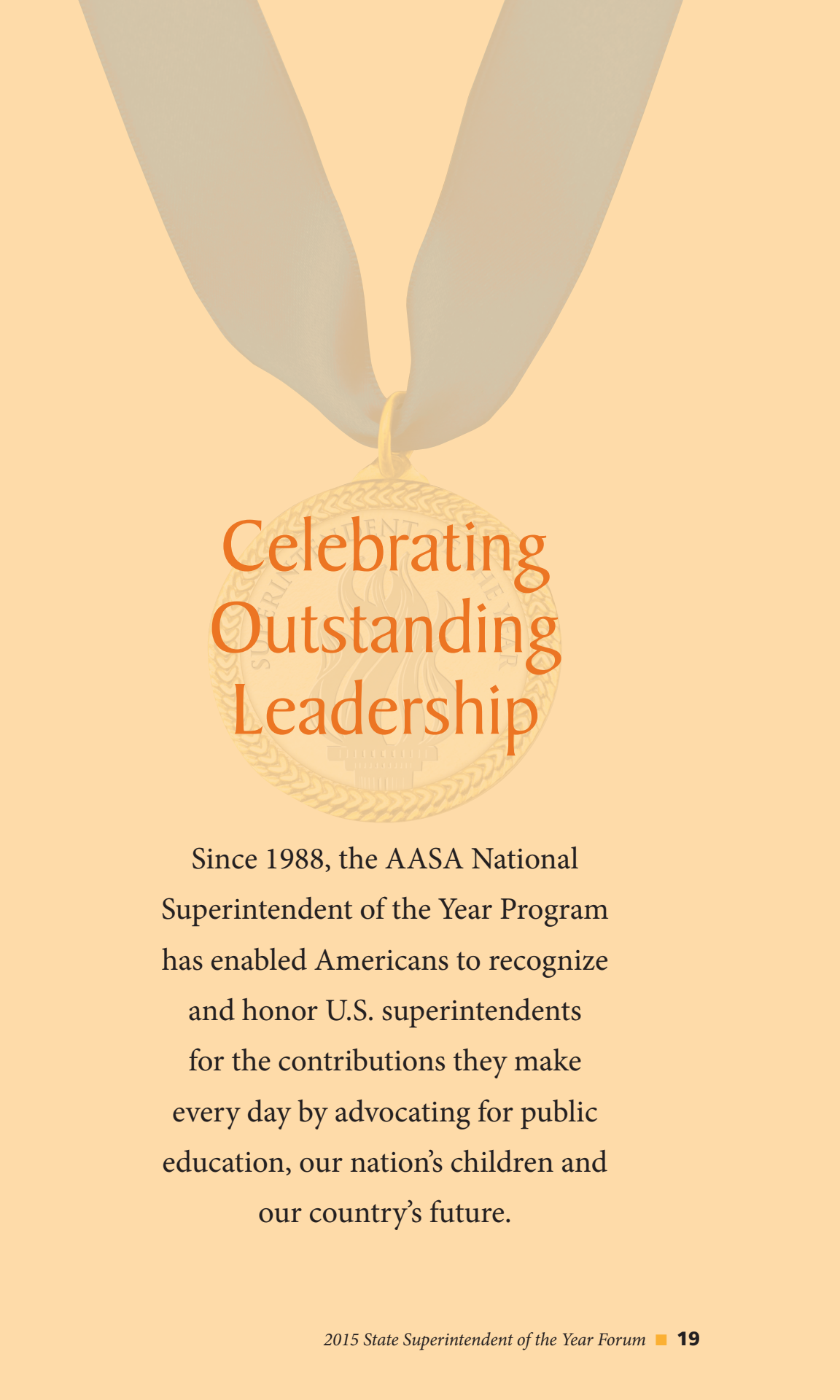
What Works Clearinghouse:
<http://www.ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/findwhatworks.aspx>

Eduard Porter – *New York Times*:
<http://www.nytimes.com/2015/09/23/business/economy/education-gap-between-rich-and-poor-is-growing-wider.html>

Collective Impact Model – Dallas:
<http://www.edtx.org/collective-impact/initiatives>

Atul Gawande, The Checklist Manifesto:
<http://us.macmillan.com/thechecklistmanifesto/atulgawande>
<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/01/24/books/review/Jauhar-t.html>

National Center for Education Statistics: <https://nces.ed.gov/>



Celebrating Outstanding Leadership

Since 1988, the AASA National Superintendent of the Year Program has enabled Americans to recognize and honor U.S. superintendents for the contributions they make every day by advocating for public education, our nation's children and our country's future.

2015 SUPERINTENDENTS OF THE YEAR

Alabama	John Heard	Perry County Alabama School District
Alaska	David Herbert	Saint Mary's School District
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Canada	Brent Kaulback	South Slave Divisional Education Council
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Florida	MaryEllen Elia	Hillsborough County Public Schools
Georgia	Philip Lanoue	Clarke County School District
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Indiana	Rocky Killion	West Lafayette Community School Corporation
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Mississippi	H. Gearl Loden	Tupelo Public School District
Missouri	Roy Moss	Grain Valley R-V School District
Montana	Michael Magone	Lolo School District

Nebraska	Brian Maher	Kearney Public Schools
Nevada	Jeff Zander	Elko County School District
New Hampshire	Jerome Frew	Kearsarge Regional School District
New Jersey	Timothy Purnell	Somerville Public Schools
New Mexico	Paul Benoit	Floyd Municipal Schools
New York	James Langlois	Putnam/Northern Westchester BOCES
North Carolina	Rodney Shotwell	Rockingham County Schools
North Dakota	Larry Nybladh	Grand Forks Public Schools
Norway	Linda Duevel	International School of Stavanger
Ohio	Jeffrey Patterson	Lakewood City
Oklahoma	Ann Caine	Stillwater Public Schools
Oregon	Randy Schild	Tillamook School District
Pennsylvania	James P. Capolupo	Springfield School District
Rhode Island	Barry Ricci	Chariho Regional School District
South Carolina	Russell Booker	Spartanburg School District No. 7
South Dakota	Timothy Mitchell	Rapid City Area Schools
Tennessee	Wanda Shelton	Lincoln County Department of Education
Texas	Michael McFarland	Lancaster Independent School District
Utah	Marshal Garrett	Logan City School District
Vermont	Brent Kay	Orange Southwest Supervisory Union
Virginia	Patrick K. Murphy	Arlington Public Schools
Washington	Dennis Kip Herren	Auburn School District
West Virginia	Douglas Lambert	Pendleton County Schools
Wisconsin	Jamie Nutter	Fennimore Community School District
Wyoming	Pamela Shea	Teton County School District #1
Canada	Brent Kaulback	South Slave Divisional Education Council
International	Linda Duevel	International School of Stavanger

For more information about the National Superintendent of the Year program, please contact the Dr. Bernadine Futrell, Director of Awards and Collaborations at bfutrell@aasa.org or 703-875-0717.



2015 Superintendents of the Year

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National Superintendent of the Year Forum

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