

NEWS RELEASE



For Immediate Release

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Washoe County School District Receives National Recognition With CUBE Award

Reno, NV (October 8, 2012) –The National School Boards Association (NSBA) has awarded the Washoe County School District the Council of Urban Boards of Education (CUBE) Annual Award for Urban School Board Excellence for 2012.

“Washoe County has made tremendous gains in increasing its graduation rate, increasing the achievement of low-income and minority students, and placing highly qualified teachers in its schools with the greatest needs,” said Joseph S. Villani, NSBA’s Interim Executive Director. “Working closely with its superintendent, the school board set high expectations for all students and staff and engaged its community as partners.”

Maryland’s Baltimore City Public Schools and Prince George’s County Public Schools were also finalists for this year’s top honor. The winner was announced during a Saturday luncheon at the CUBE Annual Conference in Atlanta.

“It’s a great honor, and a confirmation of the hard work of principals, teachers, and staff members,” said WCSD Superintendent Pedro Martinez. “This award shows what is possible when Board members work in partnership with the leadership team to implement reforms that change the lives of children every day.”

“We are honored to receive this recognition on behalf of the staff, parents, and students of the Washoe County School District,” said Ken Grein, president of the Board of Trustees. “Our Board has joined with the District to listen to members of our community, learn about their concerns, and build upon their support to help more of our students succeed in school.”

Washoe County School District is a 63,000-student school system. In 2009, school board members resolved to the community to improve the public schools, which were outperforming others in the state but had received negative reviews from residents. After an exhaustive process to solicit research, data analyses, and community input, the school board created a five-point reform initiative, *Envision WCSD 2015, Investing In Our Future*, that aimed to institute performance management systems; engage parents and the community; develop effective teachers and instructional leaders; instill a caring and positive school climate; and ensure all students leave ready for college and careers.

As a result, graduation rates rose from 56 percent in 2008 to 70 percent in 2011; the achievement gap closed as third-grade math and reading scores for African-American and Hispanic students jumped double digits. District officials now use a variety of communications tools to market their schools and foster two-way communications with parents and community members.

“Washoe County is an example of excellence for our state and for urban school districts across the country,” said Dotty Merrill, Executive Director of the Nevada Association of School Boards. “The school board, working with the superintendent, has done an exceptional job at developing a strategic plan with community involvement, and has focused on implementing that plan and continuously improving student achievement.”

The CUBE Annual Award for Urban School Board Excellence began in 2004. This is not only the first time a Nevada school district has received the award, it is also the first time a school district in the Western United States has been recognized with this award.

Previous winners are:

2011 - Mesquite Independent School District

2010 - Baltimore City Schools

2009 - Atlanta Public Schools

2008 - Brownsville Independent School District

2007 - Houston Independent School District and Miami-Dade County Public Schools

2006 - Norfolk Public Schools

2005 - School District of Hillsborough County (Florida)

2004 - Boston Public Schools

Washoe County Public Schools District was selected by an independent judging panel based on materials submitted by the school district, independent follow-up research, and information provided by the district's state school boards association.

The judges selected the winner based on the following four criteria: Excellence in school board governance; building civic capacity; closing the achievement gap—equity in education; and demonstrated success of academic excellence.

Founded in 1940, the National School Boards Association (NSBA) is a not-for-profit organization representing state associations of school boards and their more than 90,000 local school board members throughout the U.S. Working with and through our state associations, NSBA advocates for equity and excellence in public education through school board leadership. www.nsba.org

CUBE represents a total of more than 100 urban school districts in 35 states and the U.S. Virgin Islands. The districts that comprise CUBE educate nearly 7.5 million students in over 12,000 schools, with a collective budget of approximately \$99 billion. CUBE helps urban school boards find solutions to challenges at the local level and helps them to strengthen their policy making effectiveness.

For more information on the award and CUBE, please visit www.nsba.org/cube.

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About Washoe County School District: The Washoe County School District includes the Reno/Sparks metropolitan area, Incline Village, Gerlach, and Wadsworth, Nevada. The District provides each of its 63,000 students with a superior education in a safe and challenging environment and is committed to graduate every child career and college ready. For more information visit: www.washoecountyschools.org. Follow us on Twitter at WCSDTweet.

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