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Louisiana, New York, and Washington School Districts Earn Top National Honors in 2014 Magna Awards

**National award program recognizes local school boards for taking bold and innovative steps
to advance public education**

Alexandria, Va. (March 5, 2014) – St. Charles Parish Public Schools in Luling, La., Orleans/Niagara Board of Cooperative Educational Services in Medina, N.Y., and Kent School District in Kent, Wash., have been named the grand prize winners in the 20th annual Magna Awards program sponsored by the National School Boards Association’s (NSBA) *American School Board Journal’s* (ASBJ). The Magna Awards recognize school boards for taking bold and innovative steps to advance public education.

The Magna Awards, supported by Sodexo, honors districts across the country for outstanding programs that advance student learning and encourage community involvement in schools. An independent panel of school board members, administrators, and other educators selected the winners from nearly 250 submissions.

“The Magna Awards showcase outstanding models for local school board leadership and school district success to advance student achievement,” said Thomas J. Gentzel, Executive Director of NSBA. “We commend Sodexo for their continuing support of the Magna Awards to highlight the great achievements happening in public education.”

This year’s three grand prize, 15 first place, and 15 honorable mention winners were selected from three enrollment categories: under 5,000 students, 5,000 to 20,000 students, and over 20,000 students. Each of the grand prize-winning school districts will receive a \$5,000 contribution from Sodexo during a special presentation at NSBA Annual Conference, to be held April 5-7 in New Orleans.

“Just like the school districts recognized in the annual Magna Awards program, Sodexo supports student achievement,” said Steve Dunmore, President of Sodexo Education-Schools. “As a partner in education and a company committed to improving the quality of life for students, Sodexo realizes that it is vitally important to call attention to and support school districts that go above and beyond to enrich the learning environment for its students. Therefore, we are proud to sponsor the Magna Awards again this year.”

Details on the 2014 grand prizes winning programs:

- The Orleans/Niagara Board of Cooperative Educational Services, in Medina, N.Y., earned the grand prize in the under 5,000 enrollment category for its Literacy Zone/Men’s Cooking Class. The program helped the board meet its goal of being the premier provider of innovative solutions for its component school districts and their communities. At a monthly luncheon of the Men’s Cooking Class, the adult students—many of whom were military veterans—decided to help veterans through the class’s cooking and by raising community awareness of veterans’ needs. The class was part of the area’s Literacy Zone, which provides adult education

and is run by the Orleans/Niagara Board of Cooperative Educational Services. The class's culminating event for veterans may have taken place on one day—July 5, 2013—but their efforts continue to accrue benefits for all involved.

- St. Charles Parish Public Schools in Luling, La., is being honored as the grand prize winner in the 5,000 to 20,000 enrollment category for its Arts Awareness Festival, which drew inspiration from the fabled New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival. The one-day festival, now in its fifth year, showcases the district's theater, music, dance, and visual arts. Like the Jazz Festival, it features multiple stages with performances going on simultaneously. Students in kindergarten through 12th grade participate in the festival. The event raises awareness and builds support among parents and community member for the district's arts programs. The school board views it as a vital way to connect schools and community.
- In the over 20,000 enrollment category, the Kent School District in Kent, Wash., is the grand prize winner for its iGrad—Individualized Graduation and Degree Program. A partnership between Kent and Green River Community College, the program helps 16- to 21-year-olds earn high school diplomas, GEDs, college credits, or professional certification. Located in a shopping center, iGrad offers students a flexible schedule—students can attend in three-hour blocks in the morning, afternoon, or evening—and individualized learning plans. This program is the result of the school board's goal of high achievement for all students. The Kent School District has also received Honorable Mention in this year's Magna Awards for another of its programs, Kinder to College.

The 2014 winners are highlighted in a special section in the April issue of *ASBJ* and will be formally recognized on Saturday, April 5, at the Best Practices for School Leaders Luncheon, which is part of NSBA's 74th Annual Conference.

In addition to the *ASBJ* special section, the districts' winning entries will be posted on the Magna Awards website and added to the program's searchable best practices database. Both can be found at www.asbj.com/magna.

2014 Magna Award Winners:

Grand prize winners:

Orleans/Niagara Board of Cooperative Educational Services, Medina, N.Y. – less than 5,000 students
St. Charles Parish Public Schools, Luling, La. – 5,000 to 20,000 students
Kent School District, Kent, Wash. – more than 20,000 students

First place winners – under 5,000 students:

Indian Creek CUSD #425, Shabbona, Ill.
Leyden Community High School District #212, Franklin Park, Ill.
Maplewood Richmond Heights School District, Maplewood, Mo.
Murphy School District No. 21, Phoenix, Ariz.
White Pine County School District, Ely, Nev.

First place winners – 5,000 to 20,000 students:

Carmel Clay Schools, Carmel, Ind.
Kannapolis City Schools, Kannapolis, N.C.
Nash-Rocky Mount Public Schools, Nashville, N.C.
Piscataway School District, Piscataway, N.J.
Topeka Public Schools, Topeka, Kan.

First place winners – over 20,000 students:

Lexington County School District One, Lexington, S.C.
St. Tammany Parish Public School System, Covington, La.
Vancouver Public Schools, Vancouver, Wash.
Virginia Beach City Public Schools, Virginia Beach, Va.
Yonkers Public Schools, Yonkers,, N.Y.

Honorable mentions – under 5,000 students:

East Irondequoit Central School District, Rochester, N.Y.
Elk Mound Area School District, Elk Mound, Wis.
Middlesex County Public Schools, Saluda, Va.
Phoenix-Talent Schools, Phoenix, Ore.
Seaman Unified School District #345, Topeka, Kan.

Honorable mentions – 5,000 to 20,000 students:

Caesar Rodney School District, Wyoming, Del.
Danville Public Schools, Danville, Va.
Frederick County Public Schools, Winchester, Va.
Harrisonburg City School, Harrisonburg, Va.
Michigan City Area Schools, Michigan City, Ind.

Honorable mentions – over 20,000 students:

Arlington Public Schools, Arlington, Va.
Horry County Schools, Conway, S.C.
Kent School District, Kent, Wash.
Newport News Public Schools, Newport News, Va.
Spotsylvania County Public Schools, Fredericksburg, Va.

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National School Boards Association

The National School Boards Association is the leading advocate for public education and supports equity and excellence in public education through school board leadership. We represent state school boards associations and their more than 90,000 local school board members throughout the U.S. Learn more at: www.nsba.org.

American School Board Journal

American School Board Journal (www.asbj.com), published bi-monthly by the National School Boards Association (www.nsba.org), serves almost 25,000 school board members and top-level administrators from districts across the nation. The K-12 magazine, published continuously since 1891, has won 17 national honors for education reporting and design since 2006.

Sodexo in North America

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