

News Release

TEXAS ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS

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McFarland Is Texas Nominee for National Superintendent of the Year

AUSTIN—Michael McFarland, superintendent of Lancaster Independent School District, has been selected to represent Texas in the American Association of School Administrators (AASA) National Superintendent of the Year program.

McFarland oversees a school district that serves more than 7,000 students, 96% of whom are African American and Hispanic, on the southern border of Dallas. With nearly 85% of the students identified as economically disadvantaged, McFarland's commitment to student success is evident by the significant gains made in student achievement, increases in the graduation rate, and the increasing number of students taking more rigorous courses.

In an effort to close the achievement gap in math and science and ensure that their students leave with more than a high school diploma, McFarland has overseen the design and implementation of a K-12 STEM For All Model. The strategy focuses on improving math and science instruction through comprehensive and embedded professional development in Problem-Based Learning with an emphasis on STEM disciplines.

Understanding that teacher capacity represented a significant barrier to sustainable success, McFarland created a partnership with the University of North Texas at Dallas to design a STEM master's program, requiring all secondary math and science teachers to enter the program and receive targeted instruction focused on STEM. Upon completion of the program, those teachers will earn the newly created STEM master's degree. Currently, more than 40 teachers in the district are participating—including some elementary teachers who have elected to enroll in the program as well.

"We have focused on increasing the rigor in all courses through the development of teacher capacity and improving the relevance of our curriculum by implementing problem-based learning activities focused on real world issues. By being intentional about building a comprehensive system of support designed to increase college readiness and career preparation for students and families, we have significantly increased our graduation rate with more than 90% of our students graduating with a letter of acceptance to a college, university, military or with documented workforce plans. I believe it is this comprehensive approach to school transformation that has resulted in our positive results," said McFarland.

A national blue-ribbon panel of judges will select four finalists for AASA National Superintendent of the Year from among the 49 eligible state Superintendent of the Year nominees. The four finalists will be interviewed in Washington, D.C. in January. The 2015 National Superintendent of the Year will be announced and the state Superintendents of the Year will be honored at AASA's National Conference on Education in San Diego in February.

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TASA is the professional association for Texas public school administrators, providing networking and professional learning opportunities, legislative advocacy, and targeted communications to support the work of superintendents and other school leaders. Our mission is to promote, provide and develop leaders who create and sustain student-centered schools and develop future-ready students.

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