

# NASDSE Works!

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## INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

NASDSE 3  
Influences!

NASDSE 6  
Informs!

NASDSE 7  
Leads!

Meet our Board 8  
of Directors

NASDSE 11  
Goals!

## QUESTIONS/ COMMENTS:

Email NASDSE Works!  
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## A Message from the Executive Director

Dear Secretary Duncan:

As educators, we always welcome the start of a new school year. It's a time when everyone – from the students, teachers and administrators to all of the personnel who make a school system function, including the bus drivers, the school psychologists, the social workers, the kitchen staff and the school secretaries – have an opportunity to both pick up where they left off as well as start fresh with new materials, new surroundings and new faces in the classrooms and in the halls.

So it is with a new Administration. You also have the opportunity to both start fresh while at the same time having to pick up where the last Administration left off. Secretary Duncan, on behalf of the state directors of special education, I welcome you to Washington and to your new role as Secretary of Education. We know that you will have a challenging job steering the Department and its many programs in the coming years as you have promised to keep in mind that your programs “touch every child.” But please know that there are many people both here in Washington and across America who can help you. There are many wonderful programs in place that are helping children succeed every day. They are helping struggling learners, children with disabilities, children who come from homes where English is not spoken and children who may not have a place to call home in this difficult economic time. These programs can serve as exemplary models for replication. It will be important to carefully understand what makes these programs successful and to see if they can be scaled up and replicated.

As you listen to all of the voices who are giving you advice, I urge you to pay careful attention to those charged with responsibility for implementing education programs. It is frequently easy to see what is wrong with a program – test scores are low, dropout rates are high, teachers lack appropriate credentials. But the solutions for these highly complex issues are difficult and cry out for resources – more highly trained personnel, improvements to the infrastructure of decaying school buildings, access to high quality standards for each and every child – that are not always easy to find in low income or isolated small rural school districts.

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## Message from the Director (cont'd)...

I urge you to be wary of global statements often made by critics that condemn “all schools in a given school district” or “every state for failing to achieve a specific goal or target.” Seldom is there 100% failure. If such global statements are made, I urge you to challenge them and ask for specific statistics to back up such claims so that educators can target specific improvements.

As you work through all of these issues, I am also writing to give you a list of “leftover items” from the last Administration that need your attention:

- As you turn your attention to the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), it is critical that students with disabilities remain part of the accountability system. At the same time, there are still highly charged issues that remain about how best to do this. A major concern that must be addressed is the 2% rule, which no one seems particularly happy with, albeit for different reasons. NASDSE believes that the previous Administration inaccurately defined this group of students. We recommend that you review and consider revising the 2% regulations. In doing so, we urge you to seek input from educators who work with the broad spectrum of students with disabilities, as well as other stakeholders, so that you can better understand who this group of students truly represent.
- Please include Universal Design for Learning (UDL), Response to Intervention (RTI) and Positive Behavior Supports (PBS) in the ESEA reauthorization. These are wonderful tools that have come from special education but really belong in the world of general education as well.
- Please take a look at a high level within the Department of Education at the data collection requirements under both NCLB and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The data collections either overlap or are just dissimilar enough to warrant separate but costly collections. In the case of the IDEA Annual Performance Report (APR), the focus on 34 individual data collection points detracts from the states’ and local districts’ ability to make program improvements. We urge that you invite stakeholders into your office to develop a meaningful data collection that will result in significant, targeted program improvements. The State Performance Plan (SPP) is due for renewal in 2010, so there is a wonderful opportunity to revisit the entire process. The current focus on process as opposed to outcomes is discouraging for all of those leaders who are dedicated to the success of all children, including those with disabilities.
- Please provide access to education groups and other stakeholders on a regular basis. You have already begun to hold stakeholder meetings and on behalf of the state directors of special education, I thank you for including NASDSE. Our members, who are charged with implementing IDEA, look forward to serving as a resource to you and your staff during your tenure as Secretary. We hope that you will continue holding stakeholder meetings and that your assistant secretaries will be accessible as well.

Mr. Secretary, NASDSE looks forward to working with you so that we can improve outcomes for all children, especially those children with disabilities.

Sincerely,



Bill East, Ed.D.  
Executive Director

# NASDSE Influences!

NASDSE strives to provide quality support, research and collaboration in the field of education with a focus on students with disabilities. In this issue of *NASDSE Works!* we are excited to provide you with updates on the recent activities of NASDSE's U.S. Department of Education grants sponsored by the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) as well as other NASDSE initiatives.



The OSEP-funded National Center to Improve Recruitment and Retention of Qualified Personnel for Children with Disabilities, currently called the Personnel Improvement Center, began operation on October 1, 2008, as a new five-year cooperative agreement between NASDSE and the U.S. Department of Education. This new Center will continue to focus on increasing states' capacity to recruit and retain qualified personnel using evidence-based strategies. The Center will also be responsible for disseminating information on states' personnel data and will utilize multiple modes of communication to keep the general public, as well as the education community, informed of the need and opportunities for careers in special education, early intervention and related services.

*The Center establishes partnerships with other OSEP - funded Centers and national organizations to assist in accomplishing its goals.*

Strategic partnerships with other OSEP-funded Centers and national organizations will assist the Center in accomplishing its goals. Bi-monthly video conferencing with a wide range of interested persons will ensure that information about personnel development capacity-building activities are accessible to all states, local communities, preparation programs and their partners.

For Year One, we are excited to announce that 13 states have applied for the Center's services and the Center will be working with them on data management plans, local recruitment and retention strategies and personnel preparation partnerships between higher education institutions, local school districts and Part C programs. These states are: Arkansas; Georgia; Louisiana; Maine; Massachusetts; Mississippi; New Hampshire; Ohio; Tennessee; Texas; Utah; Wisconsin; and the District of Columbia.

We look forward to providing more updates on the critical work of the Personnel Center as we strive to address the pressing needs of personnel shortages in the field of special education. Please visit the Personnel Center's website for more information at <http://www.personnelcenter.org/>.



Project Forum has been in existence at NASDSE since 1979.

The project has two main goals:

- ⇒ to disseminate useful, timely and relevant information to improve services to infants, toddlers and children with disabilities by applying findings that facilitate systemic changes in policy, procedure, practice and the training and use of personnel; and
- ⇒ to provide OSEP with a mechanism and resources for analyzing policies and emerging issues that are of significant national concern.

# NASDSE Influences! (cont'd)

Continue to visit our website for our latest publication, "Universal Design for Learning (UDL)" slated to be released in the near future.

## PROJECT FORUM (CONT'D)

In early December, Project Forum hosted approximately 40 participants for a policy forum on Universal Design for Learning (UDL). Participants included state and local directors of education and individuals representing a variety of education stakeholder groups, including principals, education associations and higher education faculty. Staff from the Center for Applied Special Technology (CAST) and OSEP worked with Project Forum staff to plan the forum.

The goal of the forum was to make recommendations and suggest steps to take to address a number of policy barriers to the implementation of UDL. These barriers had been identified through a month-long virtual forum with the same participants plus others who used Sharedwork.org (an online community tool operated by NASDSE's IDEA Partnership). The document based on both of these forums is slated to be disseminated in early 2009. Be sure to regularly visit the Project Forum website at [www.projectforum.org](http://www.projectforum.org) to make suggestions on future research topics and view other new documents.



On January 26-28, 2009, 120 representatives from 40 national organizations met together to recommit to shared work through the newly refunded IDEA Partnership (<http://www.ideapartnership.org/partners.cfm>). The Partnership unites national organizations and promotes strategies that:

- ◆ build capacity among stakeholder groups;
- ◆ spread effective practices;
- ◆ address persistent problems; and
- ◆ support new ways of working across stakeholder groups and state education agencies (SEAs).

**Building Capacity** – The Partnership builds capacity by connecting to state and local affiliates of national organizations and capitalizing on existing stakeholder networks. First, the partners identify issues of shared interest or concern. Then, they build the relationships necessary to advance research/policy-to-practice. Together, they communicate a shared vision and a common message of action.

**Spreading Effective Practices** – Organizational partners work through the Partnership with federally-funded technical assistance (TA) center staff to tailor information to better meet the needs of a particular group, explain why their members should care and connect the information to broader (or narrower) organizational priorities. Thus, the partners help communicate research to their members in a way that resonates clearly with them.

**Addressing New or Persistent Problems** - The partners work together to surface divergent stakeholder perspectives and come to agreement on a shared message. Based on their agreement, they develop and disseminate a collection of materials to their networks, encouraging them to reflect on their roles and stressing the importance of working with the other groups to implement needed change. For an example of the way the Partnership spread effective practices on a particular topic, see *The Partnership Collection*, which is available at <http://www.ideapartnership.org/page.cfm?pageid=17>.

# NASDSE Influences (cont'd)

## THE IDEA PARTNERSHIP (CONT'D)

Supporting New Ways of Working – Based on interaction, perspective sharing and the gradual converging of ideas that develop as diverse stakeholders work together more regularly, the Partnership brokers opportunities for SEAs to model this way of working with the state affiliates of national organizations. Using the design and coached by the national partners, the Partnership supports new patterns of interaction between the state education agency (SEA) and its stakeholders. The Partnership contends that strategic advantage is gained by working through existing networks. The SEA sites are the laboratories for exploring and documenting that claim.

Most importantly, the Partnership is scaling up the capacity to lead and support this new way of working by building the capacity from within national organizations. Ten ‘activity leaders,’ representing key national organizations, have been highly active in promoting the Partnership approach and are committed to leading by example through Partnership activities. (See below).

**Table I: National Organizations Represented by IDEA Partnership Activity Leaders**

| National Organizations*  | Number of Members |
|--|-------------------|
| American Association of School Administrators (AASA)                                   | 13,000            |
| American Federation of Teachers (AFT)  | 1,400,000         |
| American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA)                                       | 36,000            |
| Council for Exceptional Children/Council of Administrators of Special Education (CASE) | 45,000            |
| Learning Disabilities Association of America (LDA)                                     | 15,000            |
| National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP)                           | 30,000            |
| National Association of School Psychologists (NASP)                                    | 26,000            |
| National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP)                            | 32,000            |
| National Education Association (NEA)   | 3,200,000         |
| <b>Total Number of Members in Activity Leader Network:</b>                             | <b>4,797,000*</b> |

**\*The combined network of the full Partnership has the potential to reach many more!**

Be sure to visit the Partnership website to learn more about our exciting work at [www.sharedwork.org](http://www.sharedwork.org).

## NASDSE'S YOUTH INITIATIVE

NASDSE is committed to promoting meaningful youth involvement in all of our work, particularly by supporting SEAs to advance youth/young adult participation in the decisions that affect their educational services, experiences and outcomes. For the first time, the NASDSE Professional Development Series featured a conference that focused on activities involving youth and young adult leaders with disabilities that promote systems change at the classroom, state and national levels. On December 5, 2008, this conference, “Partners in Progress: Youth/Young Adult Leaders for Systems Change,” became available to states participating in the 2008-2009 NASDSE Professional Development Conference Series.

## NASDSE Influences (cont'd)

### NASDSE'S YOUTH INITIATIVE (CONT'D)

The conference presenters were Christine Cashman, a program coordinator at NASDSE, Jennifer Kane, a special education/secondary transition consultant with the Nevada Department of Education and two young adult leaders, Joe Davidson and LeDerick Horne. They provided information on current youth leadership roles and practices, focusing on a new approach to engaging youth/young adults. LeDerick and Joe both shared their personal stories of positive and challenging experiences that led them to their successful transitions from high school to their career goals and a desire to help others in similar situations. They also discussed their involvement with state and national youth and young adult leadership initiatives, including New Jersey's Dare to Dream leadership conferences for students with disabilities, as well as NASDSE's IDEA Partnership's Community of Practice in support of transition.

A primary focus of the conference was providing an in-depth description of the planning and implementation of the Nevada Student Leadership Transition Summit as a successful model for a statewide leadership conference that meaningfully involves youth as equal partners with professionals. The day-long Summit, which was sponsored by the Nevada Department of Education with the help of several other state agency partners, took place in April 2008, on the campus of the University of Nevada-Reno. All four presenters were involved with planning and implementing the Summit, which brought together 150 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> graders with mild disabilities, teachers and counselors representing 14 school districts, as well as a team from one of Nevada's state-sponsored charter schools. The goal of the Summit was to help the students gain an understanding of the secondary transition system in Nevada and to cultivate leadership teams across the state to foster systems change for individual transition planning. Nevada is already planning a Summit 2 that will take place in May 2009.

If you would like additional information about the *Partners in Progress: Youth/Young Adult Leaders for Systems Change* conference and the resources mentioned, contact Christine Cashman at [christine.cashman@nasdse.org](mailto:christine.cashman@nasdse.org).

## NASDSE Informs!

### NASDSE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SERIES

NASDSE is proud to offer a professional development conference series which can be purchased by states. The individual conferences are available for unlimited viewing and use in those states that purchase the series. NASDSE's goal is to provide information about relevant and emerging topics in a timely manner and to enable states to widely disseminate this material through a variety of technological formats to both general and special education personnel at the school, district and state levels. The remaining conferences in the 2008-09 series are:

- P From Computers to Classrooms: Tackling Bullying in Today's Schools.  
Friday March 20, 2009: 1-3 p.m. EST.
  
- P Understanding the Big Picture: Federal Policy and its Impact on the Classroom.  
Friday May 1, 2009: 1-3 p.m. EST.

Individual CDs from previous professional development conference series are available for purchase from NASDSE's website, [www.nasdse.org](http://www.nasdse.org). For more information about NASDSE's professional development series, please contact Christine Cashman at [christine.cashman@nasdse.org](mailto:christine.cashman@nasdse.org).

# NASDSE Informs! (cont'd)

## NASDSE PUBLICATIONS

Many NASDSE publications are available for free downloading on our website at [www.nasdse.org](http://www.nasdse.org). You can search for publications by clicking on 'Publications.' NASDSE's Project Forum maintains its own website, [www.projectforum.org](http://www.projectforum.org) where all of its publications are also available for free downloading.

Recognizing that Response to Intervention (RTI) is an emerging and groundbreaking initiative, NASDSE offers a series of publications in an effort to inform and guide the field at the national, state, district and building level.

- **Response to Intervention: Policy Considerations and Implementation**
- **Response to Intervention Blueprints for Implementation: School Building Level**
- **Response to Intervention Blueprints for Implementation: District Level**
- **Response to Intervention: Research for Practice**

NASDSE's IDEA Partnership also has put together an RTI collection of materials. These materials are available at <http://www.ideapartnership.org/page.cfm?pageid=17>.

# NASDSE Leads!

## NASDSE'S ANNUAL MEETING

Each year national and state leaders in the field of special education gather to learn from and network with one another around a critical topic in the field. The 2008 NASDSE annual conference, 'Formula for Success,' was held on Kiawah Island, South Carolina. It focused on the critical topic of providing a highly capable workforce. Those in attendance had the unique opportunity to hear from and dialogue with nationally recognized experts in the field as well as to learn about exciting state initiatives. Speakers included: Governor Bob Wise, President of Alliance for Excellent Education; Ron Clark, Founder, Ron Clark Academy; Karen Erikson, Director for the Center for Literacy and Disability Studies, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; Marilyn Friend, Professor, Department of Specialized Education Services at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro; and Sarah Vazquez, nationally-known motivational speaker. Selected presentations from the conference are available for downloading at <http://www.nasdse.org/Events/PresentationsfromPastNASDSEConferences/tabid/431/Default.aspx>.



**FORMULA FOR SUCCESS**  
Providing a Highly Capable Workforce

NASDSE 71st Annual Conference and Business Meeting  
October 18-21, 2008 | Kiawah Island, SC

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## MEET OUR BOARD OF DIRECTORS

### ***Mary Watson, President (North Carolina)***

Mary Watson is the Director of the Exceptional Children Division with the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction. Prior to her current position, Mary served as Section Chief for the Policy, Monitoring and Audit Section of the Exceptional Children Division. She began her career in the North Carolina public school system following graduation from Appalachian State University with a bachelor's degree in Elementary Education. She also has Master's degrees in Elementary Education, Exceptional Children and Administration. Mary has taught in the areas of preschool, elementary and middle schools, general and special education, and adult education. She has also worked as a compliance consultant and as a regional consultant for special education. Mary has a passion for children and is dedicated to the provision of quality educational experiences for all children.


### ***Marcia Harding, President-Elect (Arkansas)***

Marcia Harding has 38 years of professional experience as a program administrator and speech-language pathologies. Prior to 1980, Ms. Harding worked in Missouri, where she was employed in a variety of settings including the public schools, a residential facility for developmentally disabled and medically fragile children, and a psychiatric treatment facility where she was Chief of Speech and Hearing Services. She also served as a consultant to the Missouri Departments of Human Services and Education, and as an instructor in the teacher training program at William Woods College and the Speech Pathology program at the University of Missouri-Columbia. In 1980, Ms. Harding joined the Special Education Division of the Arkansas Department of Education, serving in several roles prior to assuming her current position as Director of Special Education in January 2001.

### ***Bambi Lockman, Secretary-Treasurer (Florida)***

Bambi Lockman has been Chief of the Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services in the Florida Department of Education since October 2004. She is responsible for Florida's implementation of IDEA and provides leadership for numerous statewide initiatives, including the Florida Alternate Assessment, Portal to Exceptional Education Resources (PEER), transition, and Response to Intervention (RTI), as well as oversight of other discretionary projects. Bambi serves on the Florida Developmental Disabilities Council, the Florida Interagency Coordinating Council for Infants and Toddlers (FICCIT), the Governor's Commission on Disabilities and Governor's Task Force on Autism Spectrum Disorders. She is committed to collaborative partnerships among families, school district personnel and agency representatives to ensure outcomes of highest student achievement for exceptional students. Before joining the Bureau, Ms. Lockman had extensive experience at the classroom, school, and district levels, having served as staffing specialist, assistant principal, director of in-service and instructional technology, supervisor of assessment, and director of exceptional student education and student services.

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## MEET OUR BOARD OF DIRECTORS

### ***Mabrey Whetstone, Past President (Alabama)***

Mabrey Whetstone serves as the Director of Special Education Services for the Alabama State Department of Education. He received his doctorate degree in special education from Auburn University. During his teaching career, Mabrey taught students with disabilities at the elementary, junior high and high school levels. At the State Department of Education, he has served as Director of the Alabama Transition Initiative, as an Education Administrator for Focused Monitoring and Technical Assistance, and currently as State Director for Special Education Services for the last eleven years. Mabrey has served on NASDSE's Executive Board since 2004.


### ***Lynn Boyer (West Virginia)***

Lynn Boyer serves as the State Director for Special Education and the Executive Director of the West Virginia Department of Education (WVDE) Office of Special Programs, Extended and Early Learning. Under her leadership since 2004, West Virginia has established a statewide timeline for implementation of a Response to Intervention process across all grades by July 1, 2011, created extended instructional standards and performance descriptors for students taking the WV Alternate Performance Task Assessment, received \$4.8 million in federal funding to address literacy Pre-K – 12, established leadership among other state and local agencies to achieve universal access to quality Pre-K for all 4-year-olds by 2012, and identified annually a new cohort of special educators in co-teaching assignments to become technology integration specialists. Lynn chaired the WVDE's Task Force to Improve Results for Students in High Need Populations 2006 – 09.

### ***Peg Brown Clark (Wyoming)***

Peg Brown Clark has served as the State Special Education Director in Wyoming since August 2005. Prior to being appointed to that position, she worked in consultant and then supervisory capacity for the Wyoming Department of Education in both NCLB Federal Programs and Special Education. Peg has been an educator for thirty years having been a classroom teacher, special education teacher, and Director of Special Education and Title I for Platte County School District No. 1. During this time she received a Master's Degree in special education from the University of Northern Colorado and a Master's Degree in education leadership from the University of Wyoming. After leaving her work at the district level, Peg worked as a consultant and advocate for students with disabilities, serving as the Education Director for UPLIFT and Behavior Specialist for Lincoln County School District No. 2. Peg has served on the NASDSE Board of Directors since 2006.

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## MEET OUR BOARD OF DIRECTORS

### **Stephanie Petska (Wisconsin)**

Stephanie Petska has served as the State Director of Special Education in Wisconsin since 1998. Her doctorate is in the areas of education administration and special education. In her role, she helps to fulfill requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) for assessment and highly qualified teachers. She provides leadership for Wisconsin's broadly-based stakeholder group, which is recognized nationally for its central role in work with the 20 Indicators. Additionally, Stephanie has provided leadership for *Responsive Education for All Children*, a statewide systems-change initiative to implement Response to Intervention. Stephanie has 36 years of experience at the state and local level in Nebraska and Wisconsin in a variety of roles, including education supervisor, vocational coordinator, regular and special education teacher.

### **Colleen Riley (Kansas)**

Colleen Riley, MEd, currently serves as the Director of Special Education Services (SES) in the Kansas Department of Education. As the Director of SES, Colleen has provided the leadership to bring the Kansas Multi-Tier System of Supports (MTSS) framework from a grassroots effort to scale in Kansas with a focus on creating a sustainable system to meet the academic and social needs of every student. In addition, she has worked to align the accountability and technical assistance systems with the requirements of IDEA 2004 and Kansas Statutes to develop the Kansas Integrated Accountability System.



# NASDSE's Goals!

NASDSE members, supported by NASDSE staff, will:

- Improve educational results for children with disabilities through education reform.
- Bring about aligned, continuously improving educational services.
- Promote educational equity for all children.
- Strengthen ongoing professional development.
- Design efficient, cost-effective, flexible administrative systems and practices.
- Nurture partnership-based, whole-systems collaboration.
- Create school environments conducive to learning.
- Build effective family-school partnerships.
- Advance public engagement in educational reform efforts that support high achievement for all children.

To learn more about NASDSE and the valuable resources we provide, visit the following websites:

[www.nasdse.org](http://www.nasdse.org)

[www.ideapartnership.org](http://www.ideapartnership.org)

[www.projectforum.org](http://www.projectforum.org)

[www.personelcenter.org](http://www.personelcenter.org)

[www.uscharterschools.org/specialedprimers](http://www.uscharterschools.org/specialedprimers)



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