



*The National Association for Magnet and Theme-based Schools*

## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **Magnet Schools of America Announces 2017 National Award Winners**

*Washington, DC, May 1, 2017* - Magnet Schools of America (MSA), announced the recipients of its 2017 national awards in Los Angeles, CA during the 35<sup>th</sup> National Conference on Magnet Schools (April 27-29, 2017), hosted by the Los Angeles Unified School District. During the conference over 1,000 magnet school leaders and educators gathered to share best practices and to honor the leaders and educators of magnet schools. "We are very proud to acknowledge these awardees for their commitment to public theme-based magnet schools that promote diversity, innovation, and academic excellence in the classroom," said Magnet School of America, Executive Director Todd Mann.

**Idlewild Elementary School** in Charlotte, NC received MSA's highest recognition the Dr. Ronald P. Simpson Distinguished Merit Award, which is given annually to the nation's top magnet school. **Thomas Sims** of the Dickinson Fine Arts Academy in South Bend, IN was named the National Magnet School Principal of the Year. **Anne Fennell**, from Mission Vista High School in Oceanside, CA was named the National Magnet School Teacher of the Year. In addition, **Rachel Johnston** from ISD 728 in Minnesota was selected as the winner of the 11th annual National Student Poster Contest.

At the school district level, **Miami-Dade County Public Schools** was presented with the Donna Grady-Creer District Award for Magnet Sustainability and **Pat Skorkowsky** from the Clark County School District in Las Vegas, NV was named the 2017 Magnet Schools of America Superintendent of the Year.

### **Donna Grady-Creer District Award for Magnet Sustainability – Sponsored by Dr. Judith Stein**

#### ***Miami-Dade County Public Schools, Miami, FL***

The Donna Grady-Creer Award acknowledges a school district that exemplifies equity, excellence, and diversity while sustaining strong and dedicated support for magnet schools. For more than 40 years, Miami-Dade County Public Schools has been at the forefront of the choice movement in education. The district's magnet program began in 1973 with the opening of the Center for the Expressive Arts. Under the leadership of Superintendent Alberto Carvalho, the district has rapidly launched more than 109 new magnet programs in the Miami area. In total, Miami-Dade County Public Schools now offers 375 magnet school offerings.

### **Magnet Schools of America Superintendent of the Year**

#### ***Pat Skorkowsky, Superintendent, Clark County School District, Las Vegas, NV***

This annual award recognizes the important work of leadership within our school districts to keep magnet schools a priority in the portfolio of school choice options. Superintendent Skorkowsky has led his school district since 2013 and has been an educator and leader in the district for 28 years. During his tenure as superintendent, he has supported the expansion of magnet schools in the district by 44%, which now educate 30,000 students across 36 schools offering 114 unique programs of study. Impressively under his leadership, the district has increased its high school graduation rate by 25%, and over the last two years, his school district has received 49 Magnet Schools of America national merit awards.

#### **MISSION STATEMENT**

*Providing leadership for high quality innovative instructional programs that promote choice, equity, diversity, and academic excellence for all students.*

**National Magnet School Principal of the Year** - Sponsored by American Education Solutions, Inc.

*Thomas Sims, Dickinson Fine Arts Academy, South Bend Community School Corporation, South Bend, IN*

Thomas Sims has been the principal of Dickinson Fine Arts Academy for six years and has led the dramatic turnaround of this once failing school into a high performing Fine Arts and STEAM magnet. It has been recognized for achieving the highest academic gains of any school in the state and has been designated an "A" school by the state of Indiana. It also has been selected as a Magnet Schools of America School of Excellence twice over the last three years.

**National Magnet School Teacher of the Year**

*Anne Fennell, Mission Vista High School, Vista Unified School District, Oceanside, CA*

Anne Fennell is an Instrumental and Music Composition Teacher, as well as Visual and Performing Arts Department Chair at Mission Vista High School. She has taught for 25 years in public magnet schools and is a founding faculty member at her dual magnet high school.

### **2017 Magnet School of Merit Awards**

To be considered for a merit award, Magnet Schools of America member schools must submit an application that is scored by a panel of educators. These 244 public magnet schools and programs located in 20 states are recognized for their commitment to high academic standards, curriculum innovation, school diversity, specialized teaching staffs, and parent and community engagement.

There are two categories of merit awards: (1) Magnet Schools of Excellence, the top merit award given to only a select group of magnet schools and (2) Magnet Schools of Distinction, the second highest award of recognition. The highest ranked magnet schools in the Excellence category are eligible to receive MSA's highest national awards listed below.

To see a full list of the 2017 Magnet Schools of America awardees including Schools of Excellence, Distinction, and Regional Principals and Teachers of-the-Year, please visit: [www.magnet.edu](http://www.magnet.edu)

### **2017 National Merit Awardees**

**Dr. Ronald P. Simpson Distinguished Merit Award of Excellence** – Idlewild Elementary School  
*Sponsored by American Education Solutions, Inc.*

Idlewild Elementary is located in Charlotte, North Carolina and is part of Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools. It is a Title I Learning Immersion and Talent Development magnet program. It provides high ability learners from all racial, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds with the opportunity to maximize their potential. The school's motto is, "Empowering all to be extraordinary."

**Dr. Donald R. Waldrip Award** – Glacier Hills Elementary School of Arts & Science

Glacier Hills Elementary's mission is to teach students the academic and social skills necessary to be life-long learners and positive, contributing members of their society, with the arts and scientific inquiry at the heart of learning. It is part of the Independent School District 196 in Minnesota.

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## **Magnet Schools of America President's Award – Baylor College of Medicine Academy at Ryan**

The Baylor College of Medicine Academy at Ryan is a health sciences magnet program that was created in partnership with the Baylor College of Medicine and support from the Magnet Schools Assistance Program. It attracts students from more than 100 elementary schools and a wide range of socioeconomic backgrounds. It is part of the Houston Independent School District in Texas.

## **Secondary Magnet School Merit Award of Excellence – Springfield Renaissance School**

The Springfield Renaissance School is a college bound Expeditionary Learning school with a STEM focus. Since its inception, 100% of its graduating seniors have been accepted to two and four year colleges. At Renaissance, students learn in a personalized setting and apply STEM knowledge and skills to solve real world problems. It is part of Springfield Public Schools in Massachusetts.

## **Elementary Magnet School Merit Award of Excellence – Walter Bracken STEAM Academy** *Sponsored by American Education Solutions, Inc.*

Walter Bracken is home to Magnet Schools of America's 2013 Principal of the Year. It features learning labs and outdoor learning areas focused on science, engineering, creativity and innovation that enrich the school's curriculum with hands on experiences. Due to its success the district has franchised the program and expanded it to two other elementary schools. It is located in Las Vegas, NV and is part of the Clark County School District.

## **New and Emerging Magnet School Merit Award of Excellence- Thurman White Academy** *Sponsored by Hogan Lovells, LLC*

Thurman White Academy of Performing Arts provides students with opportunities to explore the stage and develop their talents. The magnet program consists of orchestra, drama, band, choir, and theater. It is located in Henderson, Nevada outside of Las Vegas. It is part of the Clark County School District.

## **About Magnet Schools of America**

Magnet Schools of America is a nonprofit education association that was founded in 1986 and authorized as a 501(c)3 in 1994. It represents approximately 4,340 magnet schools serving nearly 3.5 million students. It sponsors a national awards program, hosts professional development activities, and provides technical assistance through the National Institute for Magnet School Leadership (NIMSL). MSA supports and serves the leaders and teachers of magnet and theme-based schools, while promoting the development of new magnet programs and public schools of choice.

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