



The National Association for Magnet and Theme-Based Schools

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Magnet Schools of America Names Thomas Sims from Dickinson Fine Arts Academy, South Bend Community School Corporation, National Magnet School Principal of the Year

Washington, DC, May 2, 2017- Magnet Schools of America (MSA) is pleased to announce that Thomas Sims, Principal of Dickinson Fine Arts Academy in South Bend, Indiana is the 2017 National Magnet School Principal of the Year. Through a competitive application process, Mr. Sims was selected from a group of eight Regional Principals of the Year dispersed across the country. The award was announced during a ceremony held during MSA's 35th National Conference in Los Angeles, California on April 29, 2017 at the Westin Bonaventure Hotel.

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. The intermediate center (serving grades 5-8) has also been selected as a Magnet Schools of America School of Excellence twice over the last three years.

Mr. Sims' attends all student performances and parent events, works to maintain high expectations among students and staff, and sustains the school's mission through community partnerships (particularly with Notre Dame University), funding and marketing. His hard work is not only recognized by MSA, but parents from his community have noticed as well. Dickinson parent, Angela Hardrict, explains that, "For many years, Dickinson Intermediate School in South Bend would not have made my list of top school choices. However, five years ago, the school turned a corner in its direction under the leadership of then-new principal Thomas Sims. Principal Sims talked to the community...he involved parents, introduced new curriculum through the magnet program, refocused efforts on core curriculum and worked to improve the morale of the teachers and staff...When the time came, the choice for my two children suddenly became much easier – Dickinson was at the top of our list."

Sims' diligence in securing grants, building bridges between the academy and the community, and dedication to meeting the academic needs of students and professional support needs of faculty and staff has led to the immense success of the school.

In response to receiving the award Sims says, "Providing our South Bend families a high-quality public school choice that emphasizes academics, imagination in the classroom and adhering to a level of high expectations has proven that innovative magnet based schools can inspire children regardless of their demography. To have these efforts recognized by Magnet Schools of America affirms the decisions that we are making. The individual recognition as Principal of the Year is a phenomenal honor, but it truly takes a great team of teachers, parents and community members to bring constant innovation to our school. We are ecstatic to receive this national recognition."

That National Magnet School Principal of the Year is acknowledged by their peers for their exemplary contributions made to their profession and have demonstrated excellence in the following four areas:

- Promoting equity and diversity among students and staff within their magnet school;
- Providing equitable academic opportunities for all students;
- Leadership implementing and sustaining an innovative magnet program;
- Evidence of leadership within the school district and the magnet community.

To be selected as the National Magnet School Principal of the Year, candidates must be nominated and then submit a narrative application and three recommendation letters. In addition, they must be a member of Magnet Schools of America and have served as their school's principal for a minimum of three years. All applications are reviewed and scored by a panel of magnet educators.

To learn more about Magnet Schools of America's Principal of-the-Year Award, please visit www.magnet.edu