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News Release

National Association of State Title I Directors Honors Distinguished Title I Schools, Including Westpark and Las Animas Elementary Schools

The National Association of State Title I Directors (NASTID) announced its annual Distinguished Title I School Recognition Program winners today at its 2008 conference, "Changing Performance." The conference runs through Feb. 3 in Nashville.

Schools honored from Colorado were Las Animas Elementary School from Las Animas RE-1 School District in southeastern Colorado and Westpark Elementary School from Lake County R-1 School District in Leadville.

Highlighted schools have demonstrated significant sustained academic improvement in spite of having a 35 percent or higher poverty rate. Their profiles are shared in an online publication on the NASTID website: "Changing Performance, 2008 National Title I Conference Distinguished Schools."

The 71 awarded schools (from the 2006-2007 school year) represent 36 states and the District of Columbia. These academically outstanding schools were selected in one of two categories—exceptional student performance for two or more consecutive years or closing the achievement gap between student groups.

Las Animas Elementary School won for outstanding academic achievement for Title I students; Westpark Elementary School for

success closing the achievement gap between students eligible for free or reduced lunch and those not eligible.

The selected schools serve as an example to other Title I schools of approaches, programs and creative education techniques that work.

For instance, the area served by Anna F. Booth Elementary School in Irvington, Alabama was devastated by Hurricane Katrina. Booth Elementary School serves the children of Bayou la Batre, a small fishing community in southern Mobile County. Twenty-eight percent of the students are Vietnamese, Cambodian or Laotian; 27 percent are limited English proficient; and 90 percent qualify for free or reduced-price lunch. Hurricane Katrina devastated Bayou la Batre in August 2005, leaving over 70 percent of the students homeless.

Despite the devastation, teachers did not once express concern that the lingering impact would affect achievement. When the hurricane hit, the school was entering its third-year of Reading First and teachers were confident that the hurricane's aftermath would not destroy the foundation built through this grant. Staff members supported relief efforts to meet students' basic needs and, at the end of that difficult year, student achievement continued to rise. In its fifth year of Reading First, students continue academic gains.

Other examples include:

Poston Junior High in Mesa, Arizona attributes the success of its 1,400 diverse students to its faculty of dedicated and well-trained teachers who employ the essential elements of instruction, before- and after-school tutoring, and ongoing rigorous professional development. Monthly "best practices" in-service trainings are a key component in staff development. Teachers teach each other the skills and strategies they've found most effective in the classroom.

Desert Winds Elementary in Tucson, Arizona reduced discipline referrals by more than 58 percent, allowing more focus on learning. Positive Behavior Supports—a research-based, school-wide discipline program—helped teachers gain essential teaching time. Teacher Support Teams help teachers to evaluate students' needs and assist students in the classroom, whether the need is academic, social, or emotional. The Desert Winds' counselor and behavior coach remove barriers to learning and link intervention networks for children in the school.

Handley Elementary School in LaPorte, Indiana notes that the greatest contributing factor in Handley's success is the HOSTS (Help One Student to Succeed) program. HOSTS combines the latest research on effective educational practices and technology into a proven language arts mentoring program. Students link with business and community volunteer mentors who strengthen students' reading, writing, vocabulary development, study skills and higher order thinking skills. Last year, 80 mentors were available to students each week.

At Intermediate School 392 in Brooklyn, New York arts, integrated with academic instruction, help provide background knowledge, rich vocabulary, and improved learning and scores. Students experience the arts throughout the day while focusing on standards-aligned instruction in each core academic area as they become well-rounded productive members of society.

Title I is the largest federal-aid program in K-12 education. The Title I program has served over 150 million children in need of extra academic support in reading, writing and math since 1965. Many Title I students go on to be the first in their families to graduate from high school and college. Some—whose backgrounds include migrant farm work, non-English speaking homes, and extreme poverty—have become teachers, military officers, computer experts, and engineers.

The Distinguished Schools demonstrate strengths in the following areas: opportunity to meet proficient/advanced levels of performance; strong professional development; coordination with other programs; curriculum and instruction to support achievement of high standards; partnerships among schools, parents and communities.

To be selected, each school submits three years of achievement data and each school is visited by state representatives for evaluation.

Contact A+events (800-256-6452 or TitleI@aplusevents.com) for information on the Title I conference or contact Rich Long, Executive Director, P.O. Box 5320, Arlington, VA 22205; Phone 202-624-8911 or e-mail info@titleI.org.

For more information, contact Mark Stevens, 303-866-3898, in the CDE Office of Communications. To sign up for the CDE e-mail news service, please visit <http://www.cde.state.co.us/Communications/index.html>.

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