



The National Association for Magnet and Theme-based Schools

Magnet School Policy Conference Convenes Array of Voices Across American Education

February 12, 2018, Washington, D.C. – At a time when the debate around the path forward for American education is increasingly polarized, both sides agree that magnet schools must be part of the solution. This ‘happy medium’ status was on clear display last week at the Magnet Schools of America Policy Training Conference, where speakers from diverse viewpoints came to the stage and lauded the work that happens in the 4,340 magnet schools across the U.S.

This year’s notable speakers included: American Federation of Teachers president Randi Weingarten; special assistant Chris Rinkus in the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education at the U.S. Department of Education; U.S. Representative Virginia Foxx (R-NC); National PTA president Jim Accomando; The Century Foundation Senior Fellow Richard Kahlenberg; and Thomas B. Fordham Institute president Michael Petrilli.

“Magnet schools are really important: We think they serve a disruptive influence to segregation, and they’re really important to helping kids succeed,” said **Randi Weingarten** in her keynote address. Speaking just minutes afterwards, **Chris Rinkus** from the Department of Education echoed that idea. “Magnet schools offer parents and students a tremendous opportunity to receive instruction that they would have otherwise never received,” he said. “We view magnet schools as a critical part of the choice ecosystem.”

Magnet Schools of America convenes a policy conference each year to share policy updates and to allow educators and administrators from across the country to raise awareness of magnet schools and the nearly 3.5 million students they serve. This year’s conference took place from February 7 to February 9 at the Marriott Marquis in Washington, D.C., with 112 people in attendance.

On Thursday, the group gathered on Capitol Hill where they met with legislators. While there, they were addressed by **Rep. Virginia Foxx**, who spoke about the role magnets can play in a student’s development. “Magnet schools are among the most innovative institutions in the country. They raise the bar for traditional public schools,” she said. “As an educator, I have seen these places of learning change lives and prepare students for future success. All children, regardless of zip code, should have access to these innovative options.”

In the final day of the conference, **Richard Kahlenberg, Senior Fellow at The Century Foundation**, discussed why he thinks magnet schools are a crucial part of the future of education in the U.S. “There is a felt need in our society for institutions that will strengthen our democracy, and magnets with their focus on school diversity are a perfect vehicle for that,” he said.

Magnet schools are innovative public schools that use theme-based curricula to attract students from across different socioeconomic and racial backgrounds. These schools are open and accessible to all students, regardless of where they live, and most use a lottery system or other non-academic criteria for admission. Operated by and accountable to school districts, magnet schools are the original and largest form of public school choice. There are currently 4,340 magnet schools, serving nearly 3.5 million students across 46 states and the District of Columbia.

For more information on magnet schools, visit <http://magnet.edu/resources/research-studies/snapshot-of-magnet-schools-report>

MISSION STATEMENT

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