

Business Meeting Remarks by Sara Wheeler

Good afternoon, once again my name is Sara Wheeler and I am the president of Magnet Schools of America. I would like to thank the Whitney Young Magnet High School Jazz Quartet and the Whitney Young Magnet High School Chamber Orchestra for their lovely performance.

Today during our annual business meeting, I would like to discuss Magnet Schools of America's actions since we last met during our national conference in Los Angeles. First, I would like to invite our Secretary Donna Elam to the stage to review and approve the minutes from our last Annual Business Meeting.

Remarks Continued...

As we convene today, I am proud to report that Magnet Schools of America continues to shine as an organization. As president, my goal over the last two years was to maintain the momentum that MSA has built to bring magnet schools to the forefront of the conversation on public school choice in the 21st Century. To accomplish this goal our leadership created a strategic plan that outlines targeted objectives for the organization to achieve. These objectives will allow us to evolve and meet the dynamic needs of the magnet school community.

Over the past year, I have witnessed Magnet Schools of America take proactive steps toward accomplishing these goals. The first objective is **to be the recognized school choice leader for equitable education and diversity**. In this regard, MSA worked with the University of North Carolina Charlotte's Urban Institute to collect a comprehensive list of all the magnet schools in the nation. With this data in hand our organization is able to paint a clear picture of the magnet school landscape today. As a result of this collaboration with the UNCC Urban Institute we can confidently state there are now 4,340 magnet schools serving nearly 3.5 million students across 46 states and the District of Columbia. To augment this information, MSA also conducted a nationwide survey of its members to gain an understanding of the common characteristics found in magnet schools. With this knowledge, we were able to share the best practices found in our schools in a national report that was published by MSA last December. This snapshot includes key data and statistics about magnet schools and individual profiles of innovative magnet programs and the people who make them flourish. If you haven't already, I encourage you to read the report on our website.

To meet our second objective of **being the leading resource for innovation in integrated theme-based teaching and learning**, MSA continued to usher in a new era

as it completed the first year of its national magnet school certification program. I am proud to report that 93 magnet schools in 14 states have now successfully completed the national certification process and will be recognized this week. As you are participating in the conference you will notice representatives from these nationally certified schools proudly wearing tassels and demonstration schools sashes. I encourage you to approach these individuals and ask them about their schools and the certification experience. For those interested in participating in the national certification program, you can now sign-up on the Magnet Schools of America website for the next school year. The program will begin in August and run through June 2019.

Speaking of the MSA website, I'm eager to point out how we have worked to accomplish our third objective **to have technology rich accessible services to support the needs of the magnet school community**. Last fall, you probably noticed that MSA launched an entirely new website that was designed to be more appealing and user-friendly. In addition to this new online presence, MSA has created a new mobile grassroots action tool that can help you stay connected with your elected officials. Over the last year many of you, 380 to be exact, have harnessed the power of your smart phone to communicate with your members of Congress to express your support for magnet schools. We also have built a new membership portal and database that is designed to help you have a more seamless experience with the organization. Many of you used this new membership portal when you registered for the national conference.

Continuing with our objectives, MSA constantly strives to **serve as the public voice for exemplar magnet schools and high quality instructional practice**. A reflection of these efforts can be seen in the growing involvement and interest in Magnet Schools of America's programs and events. This year, we had the largest number of merit award applications and a competitive pool of applicants for National Principal and Teacher of the Year. Through our awards program MSA is able to showcase magnet school excellence in communities across America. This has been evident in the wide-spread coverage of these awards in local media outlets over the last year. Collectively, this helps raise the stature of magnet schools nationally. We also continue to have an overwhelming interest by our members to serve on the board of directors. With the addition of new leaders we have been able to harness their energy, creativity, and expertise into the activities of many of our Project Work Groups.

The fourth objective outlined in the Magnet Schools of America strategic plan is to **have significant relationships and partnerships supporting diversity, educational**

reform, and community and family engagement. Last year as an association we were able to continue to nurture our relationships with key partners that share our commitment to diversity and theme-based education. For example, we partnered with the National Coalition on School Diversity to promote school integration by presenting at national events, conferences, and workshops. We have also continued to nurture our relationships with Cambridge Assessment International Education and Discovery Education. Furthermore, we continue to engage with important national education groups. For example, last February the President of the American Federation of Teachers, Randi Weingarten joined us at our annual Policy Conference in Washington, DC where she proclaimed how magnet schools are very important because they serve a disruptive influence to segregation and help kids succeed.

This leads perfectly to our last objective **to influence and impact policy and research locally and nationally.** Over the past year, MSA has continued to have a seat at the table in policy deliberations in the nation's capital. Just last month, we were instrumental in securing additional funding for the Magnet Schools Assistance Program. We also continue to garner bipartisan support by engaging political leaders from all parties including the Chairwoman of the congressional committee that oversees federal education policy, Congresswoman Virginia Foxx. She spoke to our association last February about the important role magnet schools can play in a student's development. She said and I quote, "Magnet schools are among the most innovative institutions in the country."

As I conclude my term as president, I am confident that MSA will continue to focus on meeting the needs of all of its members and build on the success of the past. I want to express my sincere gratitude for all that you do on behalf of the next generation. It has been an honor to serve you the last two years. Thank you very much!

Now I would like to introduce our Treasurer, Scott Thomas for our financial report.