



AMERICAN SCHOOL BOARD JOURNAL • THE SOURCE FOR SCHOOL LEADERS



Glenn Cook, NSBA  
[gcook@nsba.org](mailto:gcook@nsba.org)  
(703) 838-6234

Gregory Yost, Sodexo  
[Gregory.Yost@sodexo.com](mailto:Gregory.Yost@sodexo.com)  
(301) 987-4214

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **Four Texas School Districts Win Honors in 2010 Magna Awards**

### ***American School Board Journal* Also Announces Top Winners, Honorable Mentions**

Alexandria, Va. March 26, 2010 – Four Texas school districts have received honors in the *American School Board Journal's* 16<sup>th</sup> annual Magna Awards program.

Valley View Independent School District in Pharr, Texas was selected as a first place winner in the under 5,000 enrollment category for its T-STEM (Texas Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) Early College High School. Developed to help realize the goal of college attainment for students in one of the poorest counties in the state, the school collaborates with local colleges to promote a college-going culture and connections to post-secondary education. Students can begin taking college coursework as freshmen and can earn up to 60 college credit hours at no cost to the student or family. More than 600 students have earned at least one credit hour from the school, and it boasts a 90 percent completion rate of students progressing from ninth to 12<sup>th</sup> grade.

The Austin Independent School District in Austin, Texas was a first place winner in the over 20,000 enrollment category for its "AISD UpClose" program, which was designed to increase the involvement of parents and community members with the school district and build leaders and advocates for the schools. Participants attend monthly classes that details how the district and the schools operate, as well as challenges and issues they face. The program also produces monthly television shows on a variety of topics. There was so much interest the first two years that two classes were formed this year to meet demand, and most of the participants from the first two years are serving on district-level and campus-level committee and task force positions.

The Friendswood Independent School District in Friendswood, Texas was an honorable mention recipient in the 5,000 to 20,000 enrollment category for its Engineering Program, which has produced national competitors and winners in student engineering contests every year since the program started. Last year, 45 students participated in a three-week after-school program with the local engineering advisory board in a local competition designed to refine their problem-solving skills.

Mesquite Independent School District in Mesquite, Texas, received honorable mention honors in the over 20,000 enrollment category for the Mesquite Employee Health Clinic. In order to save on health care costs, the school district and the City of Mesquite partnered to create a clinic and pharmacy to provide

basic primary care and minor emergency services. Its convenient location enables employees to be seen by a doctor and receive needed prescriptions in less than an hour.

Mason County Schools in Maysville, Ky., Madison School District in Phoenix, Ariz., and St. Tammany Parish Public School System of Covington, La., earned top honors in this year's competition, which is supported by Sodexo School Services. All the winning districts will be recognized at the National School Boards Association's annual conference in April in Chicago.

The Magna Awards recognize districts across the country for outstanding programs that advance student learning and encourage community involvement in schools. This year's three grand prize, 15 first place, and 15 honorable mention winners were selected based on three enrollment categories: less than 5,000 students, 5,000 to 20,000, and 20,000 and above.

"As school districts face unprecedented financial challenges, the Magna Awards are an opportunity to showcase innovation and the bold steps that school leaders take every day," said Marilee Rist, *ASBJ's* publisher and associate executive director of the National School Boards Association (NSBA). "This year's entries reflect the hard work of school boards, superintendents, and staff who strive to meet their communities' changing needs in creative and innovative ways."

"Our clients, like all school districts, are looking for innovative ways to help students achieve their goals, so we strive to find creative new ways to meet their needs with a focus on student well-being," said Lorna Donatone, Sodexo Education Market President and COO. "The Magna Awards recognize school boards and communities that share our passion for innovation and we are proud to support the program again this year."

*American School Board Journal* initiated the Magna Awards in 1995 to recognize school boards for taking bold and innovative steps to improve their educational programs. An independent panel of school board members, administrators, and other educators selected winners from more than 330 submissions. This year's applicants came from more than 40 states plus Canada and the Mariana Islands; districts in 20 U.S. states were winners or honorable mention recipients.

The 2010 winners are highlighted in a special supplement to the April issue of *ASBJ* and will be formally recognized on Monday, April 12, at the School Leaders Luncheon which is part of NSBA's 70<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference scheduled for April 9-12 in Chicago.

*American School Board Journal* ([www.asbj.com](http://www.asbj.com)) is the award-winning, editorially independent education magazine of NSBA. Founded in 1891, *ASBJ* covers a broad range of topics pertinent to school governance and management, policy making, student achievement, and the art of school leadership. In addition, regular departments cover education news and trends, school law, research, communications, governance, and school finance issues.

Sodexo, Inc. ([www.sodexoUSA.com](http://www.sodexoUSA.com)) is a leading integrated facilities management services company in the U.S., Canada, and Mexico, with \$7.7 billion (USD) in annual revenue and 120,000 employees. Sodexo serves more than 10 million customers daily in corporations, health care, long term care and retirement centers, schools, college campuses, government, and remote sites. Sodexo, Inc., headquartered in Gaithersburg, Md., is a member of Sodexo Group, and funds all administrative costs for the Sodexo Foundation ([www.sodexofoundation.org](http://www.sodexofoundation.org)), an independent charitable organization that, since its founding in 1999, has made more than \$11 million in grants to fight hunger in America.

As research indicates, diet and nutrition as well as classroom and school conditions have an impact on student performance. Sodexo is committed to student well-being and has initiated a variety of programs

around nutrition, achievement, environment, community and activities. The company partners with more than 500 school districts across the country. It serves more than 2.8 million meals each day as well as healthy beverages and snack options. Sodexo manages a variety of comprehensive service solutions, including custodial, plant maintenance and grounds keeping in the K-12 marketplace. Sodexo has been a proud sponsor of the Magna Awards since 1995.

**Magna Awards website:** [www.asbj.com/magna](http://www.asbj.com/magna)