Today’s Highlights

Friday, October 16

8:00 – 9:15 a.m.
Policy Leader of the Year Breakfast

9:30 – 10:45 a.m.
Breakout Sessions: Teacher Quality; Cyberbullying

11:00 – 12:00 noon
Keynote Address: Secretary of Education Arne Duncan

12:15 – 1:30 p.m.
Keynote Luncheon: Lt. General Benjamin Freakley

1:45 – 4:15 p.m.
Annual Business Meeting

5:30 – 7:00 p.m.
Leadership Reception and Silent Auction

1:45 – 4:15 p.m.
Leadership Banquet

Lt. Gen. Freakley to Keynote Friday Luncheon

Today’s Keynote Luncheon features remarks by Army Lt. Gen. Benjamin Freakley, who has worked hard with Executive Director Brenda Welburn to foster a working relationship between the Army and NASBE in the last year. That relationship has already led to the creation of a 2010 study group and an issue of the State Education Standard focusing on an Army–education partnership.

NASBE and the Army were brought together as leaders found common cause in fighting the incidence of dropout and increasing scholastic aptitude among high school graduates. As common interests in education have been explored, NASBE staff, state board members, and other education leaders from across the country have twice had the opportunity to hear about and sample the Army experience at Ft. Jackson, S.C.

Gen. Freakley commands U.S. Army Accessions Command, consisting of U.S. Army Recruiting Command, Army Cadet Command, and Accessions Support Brigade. Among the topics the general may address during the luncheon include the importance of quality public education to the future of the United States and how the skills required to graduate from high school prepared for post-secondary education and the 21st century workplace are the same the Army looks for in the modern soldier.

NASBE members interested in being a part of the study group can sign up using the enrollment sheet in their conference packets.

Education Governance Session Covers Case Studies from Three States

Former Commissioner Doug Christensen (NE), state Superintendent June Atkinson (NC), and state board member Mary Lord (DC) discussed the three very different governance stories unfolding in their states and DC in recent years.

In Nebraska, Christensen said, the issue was a power struggle between the state board and the legislature that happened to take the form of
Granholm Receives Policy Leader of Year Award

Michigan Gov. Jennifer Granholm will be honored as the Policy Leader of the Year, an honor given annually to a national or state policymaker in recognition of their contributions to education.

“Jennifer Granholm has recognized that in difficult economic times, a key to the future health and prosperity of her state’s children and of Michigan as a whole is inexorably linked to a strong and vital public education,” said NASBE Executive Director Brenda Welburn. “Her leadership in pursuing higher standards in public schools and for equity of access to higher education is but one facet of how the governor exemplifies what the public expects its elected officials.”

Elected governor of Michigan in 2002 and reelected in 2006, Granholm has increased spending for the state’s public schools to record levels while holding teachers and students to higher standards and championed universal access to higher education. In December 2006, she signed a law creating the Michigan Promise scholarship, a first-in-the-nation program that awards $4,000 to every Michigan student who successfully completes two years of post-secondary education. Earlier this year, she signed legislation establishing Promise Zones, which will greatly expand the opportunity for students to attend college.

Previous winners of NASBE’s Policy Leader of the Year Award include Virginia Senator Mark Warner, South Carolina Governor and Education Secretary Richard Riley, North Carolina Governor Jim Hunt, New Jersey Governor Tom Kean, former First Lady Barbara Bush, Chicago Mayor Richard Daley, and Georgia Senator Johnny Isakson.

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Are You Ready for NASBE’s Annual Silent Auction?

Over 25 items donated by states, organizations, and individuals will be available for bidding by conference participants at this evening’s Leadership Reception. Many of the items have a “flavor” of their state of origin; many are handcrafted.

All of the items will be on display this afternoon in Regency E, with bidding opening at 5:30. Proceeds from the auction go to support state board member professional development through the NASBE Foundation.

In addition to those pictured here, items include three-night stay at Breckenridge Ski Resort, Daniel Austin natural cork handbag, handmade Lincoln log cabin quilt, and Seth Thomas quartz mantel clock.
"Establishing a system and the ability to use data-informed decision making is critical," said Iowa Chief State School Officer Judy Jeffrey during Thursday’s General Session on Using Data to Improve Student Achievement. Jeffrey, joined by Ohio State Superintendent Deborah Delisle and moderator Scott Montgomery of the Council of Chief State School Officers shared barriers and breakthroughs in building and maintaining state data systems.

Iowa and Ohio both have systems with unique student identifiers, a starting point for most states building longitudinal data systems. Connecting student data across multiple years and sources of information provides the basis necessary for tracking trends. Additionally, by establishing identifiers not linked to students’ names or social security numbers, both states noted that they have avoided security breeches and conflict with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act.

The data has allowed both states to track programs and intentionally tie professional development funds and programs to targeted needs.

Still, the panelists reminded the audience that states will only be able to analyze the value-added results from data they’ve intentionally culled. Iowa has legislation supporting connections across the PK-20 continuum. Ohio, by contrast, has a sophisticated PK-12 system that is not connected to higher education. This disconnect limits the states ability to track investments in particular policies and programs through to student college and workforce entry. Delisle also noted that her state still has work to do in backwards mapping to identify readiness targets gauge if students are on track to meet rigorous postsecondary demands earlier in their education careers.

Deborah Delisle (OH), Judy Jeffrey (IA), and Scott Montgomery (CCSSO) discuss data systems.

Still, Jeffrey noted that Iowa’s system is not done growing and needs to expand its data sources to include more classroom-level inputs. The chiefs agreed that while their systems can match students to teachers, a system dominated by snapshot reading and math standardized test data is not comprehensive to the degree necessary for a fair and equitable merit pay structure.

Iowa and Ohio are at different stages, but both underscored that numbers are necessary but insufficient to developing robust systems. Data is only useful if it instigates action, and if supported by adequate funding and human resources. “You want people across the state to feel empowered,” Jeffrey said. The panelists emphasized that it takes time up front to establish a foundation of strong stakeholder capacity to ensure continuous growth.

Still, both chiefs commented that different data needs of various parties from each level of the system from state board members to individual teachers must be balanced with and effort to unite around a shared vision. The panelists advised states to determine shared definitions, where data is stored, and what data reports are needed (and not just nice) for particular groups as they structure their systems.

Governance, cont’d

controversy over state testing. In North Carolina, the question of whether the superintendent had the authority to run her own department was really a proxy for whether the superintendent should be elected or appointed. And in Washington, the board, the public, and politicians are still adjusting to the creation of a state board out of the former elected board, which occurred when the mayor assumed control of the schools. Now, Lord said, too many people are “mistaking governance for control.”

Despite the ongoing governance issues playing out in many states across the country, however, the speakers generally agreed that lay education policymakers are likely to be around for a very long time. As Lord said, “the public must have a voice in public education.”