

Arizona Charter Award Winners Announced

Honorees Embody the Promise of Public Charter Schools

Phoenix (November 13, 2017) – Charter schools have been part of the fabric of Arizona’s public school landscape for over 20 years. Through the hard work and dedication of our teachers, administrators and students, Arizona charter schools are outperforming nearly every state in the country.

The Association is proud to celebrate these success stories through our 2017 Charter Awards, spotlighting outstanding examples of public charter school excellence in teaching, academic leadership, business administration and school-wide success.

“The 2017 Charter Award honorees embody the promise of public charter schools and work tirelessly every day to improve education in schools and communities across Arizona,” said Eileen B. Sigmund, President and CEO of the Arizona Charter Schools Association. “These educators fully represent the quality choices, which are fundamental to Arizona families. Congratulations to this year’s winners!”

Winners and finalists will be honored at a ceremony on December 6 at the Hotel Palomar in Phoenix.

2017 Charter School of the Year—



Reid Traditional Schools’ Painted Rock Academy, a K-8 back-to-basics charter school serving 612 students in Phoenix. Painted Rock Academy has established itself as a model of consistency since the public charter school opened its campus six years ago. The school sets a high academic bar for students, and believes – given the right tools – all students can achieve success. Students analyze classical literature and develop a love of math, science and technology, using strong foundational skills to explore new concepts and ideas in the upper grades. A stable, committed group of teachers and strong parental involvement are the hallmarks of

Painted Rock’s success. Parents play a prominent role on campus: assisting in classrooms, planning school events and supporting the teachers so they can focus on academics. Since opening its doors, Painted Rock has continued to earn A ratings every year the labels have been given.

Runner-Up: Legacy Traditional School – Chandler, an A-rated, K-8 charter school serving 1,200 students in Chandler. Legacy Traditional Schools mission is to provide motivated students with the opportunity to achieve academic excellence in an accelerated, back-to-basics, safe learning environment taught by caring, knowledgeable, and highly effective educators in cooperation with supportive, involved parents.

2017 Charter Transformational Leader of the Year —



Sara Maline Bohn, principal at Arizona School for the Arts, a 5-12 charter school serving 850 students in Phoenix. Sara creates a culture of learning where teachers and students seek opportunities to engage in challenging work and persevere through difficult situations. She got her start at ASA in 1997 as a teacher developing the school’s French curriculum. Under Sara’s leadership, ASA maintained its unique culture while the school doubled in size. Sara’s presence on campus and inclusive leadership style make ASA a welcoming place for students, staff, and the community. Sara

focuses on the needs of students, first and foremost. Through her mission driven decisions, Sara champions success and growth for all students and teachers and has earned the respect of the entire community.

Runner-Up: Peter Boyle, Founding School Director of Western School of Science and Technology: A Challenge Foundation Academy, a 7-12 charter school serving 600 students in west Phoenix's Maryvale community. Data, both qualitative and quantitative, proves that Peter's leadership is setting a high bar on campus and raising the bar for what education should look like in Maryvale.

2017 Charter Business Leader of the Year —



Suzanne Drakes, Assistant Executive Director at AAEC Early College High Schools, a network of six charter schools serving 1,700 students and 107 employees. Suzanne is a hands-on leader. While she is primarily responsible for the school's business office, she also manages school expansion, including bonding, land acquisition and construction. Suzanne is often seen on school campuses, working with principals and teachers to determine the academic and building needs of each school. AAEC's unique model requires its campuses to be located on or near a community college.

Suzanne develops relationships with her higher education counterparts to ensure that students are successful. Always looking to put more money in the classroom, Suzanne is constantly researching new vendors and improving efficiency. In addition to her business support, Suzanne also coordinates summer trips for students to receive firsthand experience in the fields of veterinary or environmental science. Suzanne is passionate about the school's mission and the well-rounded experiences students take with them after graduation.

Runner-Up: William Rubasch, Chief Operating Officer of Arizona Charter Schools, a network of seven charter schools including the La Paloma Academies in Tucson, Heritage Elementary Schools in Williams and Glendale, and the Liberty Traditional Charter Schools in Phoenix and Douglas. William plays a leadership role in every project he manages. By leading budgeting, he alleviates the stress on principals and teachers, so they can focus on the core mission of providing students with an excellent education.

2017 Charter Teacher of the Year —



Bonnie Weppner, ELL kindergarten teacher at Pioneer Preparatory School: A Challenge Foundation Academy, a K-6 charter school serving 580 students in Phoenix's Maryvale community. Bonnie is a seasoned elementary school teacher who is known as the heart and soul of her campus. In a Title I school where 99 percent of students qualify for free or reduced priced lunch, many of Bonnie's students have never attended preschool and start the year having never held a pencil. As an ELL class, English is not the first language for these students. Bonnie helps scholars realize their language potential in English, while still embracing their

heritage. Bonnie instills a wonderment and love of learning in all of her kindergarten students. Through that love of learning, students are able to achieve their full potential.

Runner-Up: Ashley Sweigert, third-grade teacher at Imagine Elementary at Tempe, a K-6 charter school serving 285 students in Tempe. Ashley is not only the runner-up for 2017 Arizona Charter Teacher of the Year, but was also honored as the 2017 National Teacher of the Year for Imagine Schools, a national non-profit charter school network serving more than 30,000 students. Ashley is a dedicated teacher with great passion for her students' success.



Want to learn more about the winners? Beginning this week, the Arizona Charter Schools Association will publish profiles of the winners on the Association's blog. Find out more at <https://azcharters.org/news>.

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About the Arizona Charter Schools Association

The Arizona Charter Schools Association is a nonprofit organization that advocates and strengthens the autonomy, equity, and quality of Arizona's diverse public charter schools. As a national leader in the public charter school movement, Arizona's 556 charter schools serve over 185,000 students in the 2017-18 school year. Academically, Arizona charter schools continue to produce excellent results. For the last three years, public charter students outperformed the state average on the AzMERIT assessment. In fact, if Arizona's public charter students were separated and measured as their own state, it would rank among a handful of the top-performing states in the entire country on the Nation's Report Card. For more information, visit www.azcharters.org or call 602.944.0644.