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## 2008-09 Class Completes Superintendents Academy

The list of qualified individuals ready to assume the demanding position of school superintendent grew by 11 names this month with the successful conclusion of the second Prospective Superintendents Academy hosted by the Tennessee Schools Boards Association (TSBA), the Tennessee Organization of School Superintendents (TOSS), and the Niswonger Foundation.

Those who successfully completed the 2008-09 Prospective Superintendents Academy are:

- Mr. Robert E. Britt**, Principal of Carpenters Middle School, Blount County Schools;
- Dr. Dixie Chapman Bowen**, Supervisor of Elementary Education, Bristol City Schools;
- Dr. Gary Lilly**, Principal of Avoca Elementary School, Bristol City Schools;
- Dr. Janine M. Wilson**, Assistant Director of Schools, Fayetteville City Schools;
- Mr. Steve Starnes**, Supervisor of Attendance, Hawkins County Schools;
- Dr. Tammy P. Knipp**, Instructional Supervisor, Henderson County Schools;
- Dr. John Richard Barker**, Executive Director of Research, Evaluation and Assessment, Memphis City Schools;
- Ms. Carla H. Franklin**, Principal of Hawkins Mill Elementary, Memphis City Schools;
- Dr. Cedrick Gray**, Principal on Special Assignment, Department of Curriculum & Professional Development, Memphis City Schools;
- Dr. Timothy Setterlund**, Principal of Collierville High School, Shelby County Schools; and
- Mr. John S. Aitken**, Acting Director of Schools, Shelby County Schools.

“We are extremely proud of this accomplished group of individuals and the enthusiasm with which they approached this rigorous program,” said TSBA Executive Director Tammy Grissom. “A dynamic, innovative and highly-skilled superintendent is crucial to the success of any school system, and based on what we have seen over the past year, we believe these eleven individuals have the tools to meet that challenge.”

According to Niswonger Foundation Executive Director Buzz Thomas, the Superintendents Academy meets a need in Tennessee’s public education system.

“We started this academy with TSBA to get more highly qualified candidates in the pipeline to become Tennessee school superintendents,” Thomas said. “After evaluating this year’s candidates, I’m pleased to say that we are succeeding famously. I look forward to another great academy in 2009 with retired Maryville Superintendent Dr. Mike Dalton again at the helm.”

TOSS Executive Director Keith Brewer believes the Academy plays a vital role in preparing the state’s next generation of superintendents.

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“The superintendency is one of the most demanding jobs in America,” said Brewer. “Too often we expect principals and assistant superintendents to step right into the job without additional training. This intensive academy helps provide the additional tools needed to effectively lead a school system.”

According to TSBA, which conducts more superintendent searches in Tennessee than any other organization, our state faces a shortage of candidates who are prepared to lead school districts. Because Tennessee superintendents’ salaries average nearly 50 percent less than those in other states, it is also difficult to recruit out-of-state talent. As a result, Tennessee has a critical need for a preparatory program for prospective superintendents.

Created in 2007 to address this need, the Academy provides 16 days of training designed to help those with experience in such fields as education, business, military, government or public service acquire the unique knowledge and skills necessary to manage a school system. Courses were taught by top educational leaders from across Tennessee, and sessions covered subjects including school finance, school law, board relations, technology, personnel, and facilities management.

Primary support for the Academy comes from tuition and from the Niswonger Foundation. Candidates who are currently Tennessee educators and are recommended by their employing school board are given preference for the annual training, but anyone may apply for admission. Up to 15 candidates will be accepted each year.

Upon successful completion of the program, candidates receive certification from the Academy’s independent review board consisting of educators and business leaders. The review is chaired by a representative of the Niswonger Foundation. Evaluation of candidates was based upon work product, portfolios, class participation, and a final oral presentation.

The Tennessee School Boards Association, a statewide nonprofit organization founded in 1939, is a federation of the state’s school boards. It serves as an advocate for the interests of Tennessee’s public school students and school districts and provides in-service training and technical assistance for the more than 950 board of education members in Tennessee.

The Tennessee Organization of School Superintendents is a leading advocate organization for public education in the State of Tennessee. Since 1975, TOSS has been progressing public education and addressing the needs of the state’s school administrators.

The Niswonger Foundation is a catalyst for educational improvement in Tennessee. The primary focus of the Foundation’s work is education and its mission is to create opportunities for individual and community growth through education and other charitable activities.

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