

## DISTRICT

Grand Island Central School District

## NAME & TITLE OF CONTACT PERSON FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Richard Little Jr., Board of Education President  
Robert W. Christmann, Superintendent of Schools

EMAIL: robertchristmann@k12.ginet.org

PHONE: 716-773-8801

## TITLE OF BEST PRACTICE

BOARD LINKAGE MEETINGS TO FOSTER SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

## DESCRIPTION

In order for the Grand Island Board of Education to be a more effective decision making body, it must seek input from those individuals and organizations it serves. The concept of a "Linkage Meeting" was proposed and developed during the 2008-09 school year. The board members schedule a third meeting each month to meet informally with two groups per evening. This innovative process was selected as the American School Board's 2007 Magna Award as a National Grand Prize Winner for school districts up to a 5,000 student enrollment.

## PARTNERS

All school and community organizations.

## NEED ADDRESSED

Clearly it is important for a board of education to be "in touch" with its own staff and community organizations. Strong communications are critically important to the success of school districts. There is a need for board members to be good listeners to be able to maximize student success. Grand Island Board members have created a climate of trust based on their willingness to listen and to make decisions related to the content of the Linkage sessions.

## COSTS/RESOURCES USED

One plate of cookies, coffee and tea.

### BRIEFLY DESCRIBE HOW YOU IMPLEMENTED THIS

The superintendent had implemented this program in his previous district. Individuals/Groups are invited to meet with the Grand Island Board of Education. In the invitation they are told that this is an opportunity to share their thoughts directly with the Board describing what, in their opinion, is going well and what areas need attention/improvement. Notes are taken of the individual comments without recording the source. The Board receives these written comments and then uses them to make more immediate changes as well as to assist the Board in developing the annual budget.

### WHAT WERE THE OUTCOMES

The Board has used the Linkage Meetings to improve the District curriculum. Personnel have been added based on Linkage Meeting comments. The Board has earned a high degree of credibility among participants. Groups look forward to the opportunity to meet with the Board members. Several comments led to cost saving measures which were easily implemented. The Board keeps a notebook of previous Linkage Meeting comments and to which it refers in its deliberations prior to future votes.

Since it represents the expressed desire of every board to be good communicators and decisions made based on actual Linkage Meeting feedback empowers those most affected by the results.

Attached is the master list from which the Grand Island Board of Education is scheduling its two meetings on one night per month, as well as information on the Magna Award.

This program serves as an example to others because it is clearly a best practice which demonstrates that communicating with a board of education can and does produce positive outcomes and better decisions. Many individual notes of appreciation have been sent to the board following the Linkage sessions.

Are there supporting materials you would recommend or share? We can provide the Linkage Meeting invitations, a set of all the comments and how the Board used them to make informed decisions.

GRAND ISLAND  
 BOARD OF EDUCATION  
 JULY, 2009  
 POSSIBLE LINKAGE MEETINGS

GROUP	YES	NO
1. High School Students	_____	_____
2. Middle School Students	_____	_____
3. Recent High School Graduates	_____	_____
4. Law Enforcement (GI, EC, State Police)	_____	_____
5. Newspapers (Dispatch, Buffalo News, NF Gazette)	_____	_____
6. Booster Clubs (Athletic and Program)	_____	_____
7. Building Shared Decision Making Committees	_____	_____
8. Building PTA's/District PTA	_____	_____
9. Teachers (General)	_____	_____
10. SRP (General)	_____	_____
11. GITA/SRP Union Reps	_____	_____
12. Administrators	_____	_____
13. District Office Staff	_____	_____
14. Senior Citizens	_____	_____
15. Realtors	_____	_____
16. Civic Groups (Rotary, Lions, etc.)	_____	_____
17. Town Board	_____	_____
18. Business Community	_____	_____
19. GI Chamber of Commerce Board	_____	_____
20. Parents of Special Needs Students	_____	_____
21. Area 2 and 4 Year Colleges	_____	_____
22. Other Groups?	_____	_____

# American School

AMERICAN SCHOOL BOARD JOURNAL • THE SOURCE FOR SCHOOL LEADERS

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Alexandria, VA 22314-3493  
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[www.asbj.com](http://www.asbj.com)

October 30, 2006

Roberta Colacino  
School Board President  
Newark Central School District  
100 East Miller Street  
Newark, NY 14513

Submitter FAX: 315-332-3523  
Submitter e-mail: [rcolacino2@newark.k12.ny.us](mailto:rcolacino2@newark.k12.ny.us)  
District FAX: 315-332-3523

Magna Awards Entry: MA2007-94

Dear Roberta Colacino:

We're delighted to inform you that our panel of judges has selected your program, *Board Linkage Meetings to Foster School Improvement*, as the Magna Awards 2007 **Grand Prize Winner, Category 1**. As the Grand Prize Winner, Category 1 your program—along with the Grand Prize Winners in two other categories—is one of the three programs most highly honored in this year's competition. As such, your program will receive special recognition both in print and at the Magna Awards presentation next spring. In addition, your school district will receive a \$3,500 contribution.

A description of your program will appear in a special supplement to the April 2007 issue of *American School Board Journal*. Magazines containing the supplement will mail in mid-March, at which time we will send you eight copies. If you could postpone the formal announcement of your award until March 15, we'd greatly appreciate it. When the issue is published, we will send press releases about the awards program to the national news media. We will also send copies of the press release to you. If you wish to spread the good word about your honor further at that time, please feel free to do so.

We also will recognize your district and the other Magna Award winners at the *American School Board Journal's* Luncheon for School Leaders during the NSBA Annual Conference in San Francisco, April 14-17, at the Moscone Convention Center. We hope someone representing your board will be our guest at the luncheon on Monday, April 16, 12:45-2:30 p.m. at the San Francisco Marriott. (Travel to the conference will be at your district's expense.) If the superintendent and/or members of your board do intend to travel to the NSBA conference, we will arrange for them to receive complimentary luncheon tickets. (We will be in touch with your district closer to the date of the conference to confirm this information.)

Roberta Colacino  
October 30, 2006  
Page Two

Our reporter, Cecile Holmes, will be in touch with you soon to get more information about your winning program to help in preparing the Magna Awards supplement. In order to complete the publication, we will also need the following material from you:

1. A list of the members of your school board, **exactly** as your district would like the names to appear in the supplement. (Please see the enclosed sample page from last year's publication.) For your convenience, we have enclosed a "Board Listing" form for your district. Please complete it and fax it back to us at 703-549-6719, attention Margaret Suslick, as soon as possible.
2. One or more color photographs showing the program at work. (Please see the enclosed guidelines for submitting photographs.) Please be aware that we must have signed releases for any minor children appearing in a photograph selected for publication or we can't run the photo. Do not send photos of minor children for whom you do not have or cannot obtain releases. For your District's convenience, we have enclosed copies of our "Standard Minor Photo Release" (<http://www.asbj.com/magna/ASBJMinorPhotoRelease.pdf>) and our "School District Certification of Photo Release on File" (<http://www.asbj.com/magna/SDCertOfPhotoRelease.pdf>). Please make photocopies of them as needed.

Please send these materials to the Magna Awards by **January 3, 2007**. If you have any questions, you may call Magna Awards Project Coordinator Margaret Suslick at (703) 838-6739 or Magna Awards Project Editor Naomi Dillon at (703) 838-6768.

On behalf of *American School Board Journal* and Sodexo School Services, congratulations and best wishes.

Cordially,



Marilee Rist  
Publisher  
*American School Board Journal*

Enclosures: 4

cc: Robert W. Christmann, superintendent  
Roberta Colacino, board president

**Robert Christmann - Magna 2007 Deadline Extended to October 11th**

**From:** <msuslick@nsba.org>  
**To:** <rchristmann@newark.k12.ny.us>  
**Date:** 10/2/2006 3:43 PM  
**Subject:** Magna 2007 Deadline Extended to October 11th

**American  
School**

<p><b>* * * THE MAGNA AWARDS</b>  <b>Sodexo</b> ADVANCING STUDENT LEARNING  <small>SCHOOL SERVICES</small> THROUGH SCHOOL BOARD LEADERSHIP</p>	<p><b>DEADLINE EXTENDED</b>          apply by Oct 11 for          the 2007 Magna Awards</p>
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## GAIN RECOGNITION FOR YOUR DISTRICT



**More About the  
Magna Awards**

There's still time to spotlight your school district and win \$3,500. **The deadline for entering the 2007 Magna Awards has been extended to October 11th, 2006.**



**Last Year's  
Winners**

Presented by American School Board Journal, with the generous support of Sodexo School Services, the annual Magna Awards recognize school boards that are taking bold and creative steps to advance student learning through programs developed or actively supported by the school board. A distinguished panel of independent judges will select up to two dozen winners and award a cash prize of \$3,500 to each of three Grand Prize Winners, one from each of **three enrollment categories**: under 5,000, 5,000-20,000, and over 20,000.



**Nomination Form**

Nomination forms are available online. **Nominations should be postmarked by October 11th, 2006.**

Questions?

Please Contact Margaret Suslick, 703-838-6739

Click [here](#) to unsubscribe.

1680 Duke Street, Alexandria, VA 22314

**From:** "Cecile Holmes" <cecile.holmes@gwm.sc.edu>  
**To:** <rchristmann@newark.k12.ny.us>  
**Date:** Tue, Dec 12, 2006 5:34 PM  
**Subject:** Newark's Magna Award

To: Robert Christmann and Roberta Colacino  
From: Cecile S. Holmes for the Magna Awards

Dear Dr. Christmann and Mrs. Colacino,

Congratulations on your Magna Award! I'm the writer for the American School Board Journal Supplement on the award winners. I will also be writing a feature article on the Grand Prize winners, including your district for a spring issue of ASBJ.

And I need your help. I must finish all interviews by Dec. 19 to meet my deadline. So, I'm asking each of you to please read the following question and respond in a reply email. If you can find time to do that this week, I'd appreciate it. If not, please reply by Dec. 19.

1. What is the most important aspect of the Board Linkage project in terms of school board involvement?
2. How has the project fostered better board-community communication?
3. Why is this is a "model" for other districts?
4. How do you feel about being a Grand Prize Winner?
5. How has this project enhanced education for the district's students?

If you have questions, my contact information is listed below.

Many thanks for your time and help.

Sincerely,  
Cecile S. Holmes for the Magna Awards  
cholmes@sc.edu  
phone: 803-777-5913/803-269-9837

Many thanks,  
Cecile S. Holmes  
for the Magna Awards  
cholmes@sc.edu

**CC:** <rcolacino2@newark.k12.ny.us>, <cholmes@sc.edu>