



Special Olympics
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National Recognition Program

National Recognition Program 2020 – 2022 Certifying Body

Name	Organization	Title	Role
Molly McCloskey	Strategic Questions Consulting Member of NELN and Consultant	Executive Director Education Consultant	Chair
Gary Baker	Rowan University	Assistant Director, Greek Affairs	Member
Ericka Uskali	National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grades Reform	Executive Director	Member
Fran Salyers	Schools to Watch	KY Schools to Watch State Director	Member
Jeff Sherrill	National Student Council Member of NELN	Associate Director	Member
Jill Cook	American School Counselor Association	Assistant Director	Member
Sharon Adams-Taylor	AASA, the School Superintendents Association	Associate Executive Director	Member
Pam Hoke	Sycamore Creek Elementary	Special Education Teacher	Member
Lindsey Atkinson	National Federation of State High School Associations	Director of Sports & Communications Associate	Member
Jeff Wooten	Kellis High School	Principal	Member



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Member Information

Molly McCloskey, Chair

Executive Director

Strategic Questions Consulting, LLC

Molly McCloskey, founder and executive director of Strategic Questions Consulting, has worked in every level of education from early childhood through graduate school. Prior to founding her own company, she served as CEO of Operation Respect, a non-profit which led anti-bullying efforts in the United States, Palestine, Japan, Ukraine, and Israel. Earlier, while co-chair of Governor Martin O'Malley's Partnership to End Childhood Hunger in Maryland and Director of No Kid Hungry, Maryland, Molly increased access to federally funded meals for children in all 26 counties through a public-private partnership of state agencies and non-profit organizations. During her tenure as Managing Director, Whole Child Programs at ASCD, Molly co-developed and directed the education reform effort to ensure each child in each school in each community is healthy, safe, engaged, supported and challenged.



Ms. McCloskey has presented across the United States, Canada, Germany, and Israel. She has written and been interviewed about hunger, poverty, school reform, and whole child education in the Baltimore Sun, Miami Herald, USA Today, Edutopia and the Chicago Tribune. Her specialties include anti-bias and equity efforts in schools and other organizations, school/organizational climate and culture, cultural competence, social and emotional learning, a whole child approach to education, and evidence-based planning for sustainable change.

Strategic Questions Consulting, LLC

Strategic Questions Consulting provides custom consulting services for leaders and organizations. From inspiring keynote presentations to "in the trenches" leadership coaching to ongoing facilitation of school and organization improvement processes, our work is interactive and engaging, rooted in adult learning research and specific to your context. With expertise including anti-bias and equity efforts, school/organizational climate and culture, social and emotional learning, a whole child approach to education, and leading sustainable change, Strategic Questions Consulting provides support which enhances our clients' strengths, builds consensus around their needs, and leads them to answers for their specific context.





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Gary Baker, Member

Assistant Director, Greek Affairs
Division of Student Affairs
Rowan University

Gary Baker works at Rowan University in Glassboro, NJ primarily overseeing Fraternity & Sorority Life on campus. Since 2011, he has worked in various capacities at Rowan, including Campus Recreation, Orientation, Student Government, Leadership Programs, and part-time with Athletics and as an adjunct faculty member. He began volunteering with Special Olympics in 2009, and has been involved with Unified Sports since 2012.



Rowan University

Rowan University established its Special Olympics Unified Sports program in January 2012 as a partnership with Special Olympics New Jersey. Started first as a program through the Rec Center, it has evolved into an award-winning student organization that has involved hundreds of Special Olympics athletes and more than 1000 students since its inception. Rowan Unified Sports was the first college to be recognized as a National Banner school in New Jersey, and has served as a model of inclusion for other universities across the state and nation.





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Ericka Uskali, Member

Executive Director

National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grades Reform

Ericka Uskali is the Executive Director for the National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grades Reform. She began her career as a middle-school teacher, and has since been the Assistant Director for the Association of Illinois Middle-Grades Schools, served as a comprehensive school and district reform instructional coach, educational consultant and professional development specialist, and school district administrator overseeing a School Improvement Grant. As Executive Director of the National Forum, Ericka oversees a national network of middle-grades schools, as well as such programs as the Schools to Watch and International Schools to Watch recognition and school reform process and annual national conference, federal grant work, middle-grades research, middle-grades advocacy efforts, and the EWI school training process and online tool. Ericka has both a Masters and Specialist degree in Educational Leadership.



National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grades Reform

The National Forum to Accelerate Middle Grades Reform (established 1997) unites the most prominent leaders in middle-grades reform. The members of the National Forum believe that youth in the middle grades are capable of learning and achieving at high levels. They share a sense of urgency that high-performing schools with middle grades become the norm, not the exception. According to the Forum's vision statement, high-performing middle-grades schools (schools with grades 5-9) focus on four interrelated domains: academic excellence, developmental responsiveness, social equity, and organizational structures and supports. They do not choose between equity and excellence, or between a healthy school climate and a strong academic program. They recognize that all of these are essential if every student is going to meet high standards preparing students for college and career readiness.



The Forum's mission is to work together and mobilize others to improve the academic and developmental outcomes of every middle-grades student. To achieve this mission of improving student outcomes, the Forum employs interconnected goals:

- Improve school and classroom practice through its Schools to Watch initiative and major grant projects.
- Engage key stakeholders in advocating for middle-grades reform.
- Enhance the capacity of Forum members and other middle-grades leaders to accelerate middle-grades reform.



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Fran Salyers, Member

State Director

Kentucky Schools to Watch

Fran Salyers has been involved with public school education for almost 50 years. She spent 22 years in the classroom teaching seventh and eighth graders, eight years at the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) as the team lead for a statewide middle school initiative, eight years as the Director of a statewide center for middle schools, seven years as a university supervisor of student teachers, sixteen years as the co-director of Kentucky's School to Watch program, and over twenty-five years as the Executive Director of the Kentucky Middle School Association. She served as the president of the Association for Middle Level Education in 2000 and has received the President's Award from that association 3 different times. She continues to serve that association as chair of the Foundation Fund Committee. Both her work experiences and volunteer efforts have all focused on middle grades education and young adolescents. Her experiences have provided her with many opportunities to meet and talk with others in education, both practitioners and recognized experts, providing her with a strong knowledge base and unique perspective.



Kentucky Schools to Watch

The Kentucky Schools to Watch program recognition and school improvement program that is based on the criteria for high performing middle schools set by the National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grades Reform.





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Jeff Sherrill, Member

Associate Director

National Association of Student Councils

Jeff Sherrill is Associate Director of National Student Council (NatStuCo) at NASSP. He joined the association in spring of 1996. As Associate Director, Jeff is responsible for providing support for member advisers and student leaders through the programs and services that NatStuCo offers. He was instrumental in the development of the Raising Student Voice & Participation program for middle level and high schools.



In addition to his work at NASSP, Jeff serves on several national committees including the Civic Mission of Schools and the National Education Leadership Network (NELN) for SONA-UCS. In 2011, he was tapped to serve on a sub-committee working on the reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act.

A graduate of Appalachian State University with a degree in middle level education, Jeff taught at Newton-Conover Middle School in Newton, North Carolina prior to joining NASSP. He holds certificates in experiential education and universal access training from NC Outward Bound, Alpine Towers, and Challenge Masters Inc. and volunteered for nearly 20 years on the rescue squad before moving to Virginia. Jeff has been recognized for his work at NASSP by the Pennsylvania Association of Secondary School Principals and in 2018 he received the Francis Bounds Excellence in Leadership Award from the North Carolina Association of Student Councils.

Outside of work, you will find Jeff on a river or in the woods enjoying his passions for kayaking and photography.

National Student Council

Since 1931, the goal of National Student Council (NatStuCo) has been to help all student councils become more effective organizations. NatStuCo represents middle level and high school councils nationwide and abroad. Focusing on its four tenets of Leadership, Service, Voice and Engagement, NatStuCo features resources and programming that support and encourage school efforts to create opportunities for students to develop and apply essential leadership and civic-based skills. NatStuCo is a program of the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) and is located at the NASSP national office in Reston, VA





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Jill Cook, Member

Assistant Director

American School Counselor Association

Jill Cook is assistant director of the American School Counselor Association (ASCA), where she helped develop and continues to oversee the National School Counselor of the Year and Recognized ASCA Model Programs. Jill also serves as a liaison to numerous K-12, nonprofit and for-profit organizations that work on issues related to the well-being of our nation's students.

Jill has been the chairperson of the National Consortium for Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services and is a member of The College Board's Counselor Community Advisory Group; the National Working Group on Foster Care and Education; the Evidence-Based School Counseling Conference; the Coalition to Support Grieving Students, the STEM Equity Pipeline through the National Alliance for Partnerships in Equity; and the National Coalition of Personnel Services in Special Education and Related Services. She also represents ASCA on the Council of National School Counseling and College Access Organizations.



She participated in the American Express Leadership Academy and worked on the revision of Learning Forward's Standards for Professional Learning. She has also worked with the U.S. Army and the National Association of Secondary School Principals on the Leadership and Professional Development Symposium for principals and school counselors. In 2014, the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention presented her with the Allies in Action Partner Award for her work on the development of a model school district suicide prevention policy. In 2019, the National Dance Society recognized Jill with the Dance Advocate Award for her work on supporting students' mental health.

Jill is a certified association executive (CAE) through the American Society for Association executives. She received her bachelor's and master's degrees from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and has done postgraduate work at UNC-Greensboro and Appalachian State University. She was a music teacher, middle school counselor and assistant principal before joining ASCA.

American School Counselor Association

The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) is a nonprofit professional organization based in Alexandria, Va. ASCA promotes student success by expanding the image and influence of school counseling through leadership, advocacy, collaboration and systemic change. ASCA helps school counselors guide students toward academic achievement, career planning and social/ emotional development to help them become tomorrow's productive, contributing members of society. ASCA provides professional development, publications, resources, research and advocacy to professional school counselors around the globe. ASCA administers the Recognized ASCA Model Program (RAMP), the School Counselor of the Year awards and publishes the ASCA National Model.





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Sharon Adams-Taylor, Member

Associate Executive Director

AASA, the School Superintendents Association

Sharon Adams-Taylor is Associate Executive Director of AASA, The School Superintendents Association. As such, she is responsible for initiatives on Medicaid and CHIP, school discipline, adolescent health, including adolescent sexuality, coordinated school health, and mental health; youth development; social-emotional learning and school connectedness; school safety; childhood hunger and childhood obesity; and environmentally healthy schools. She is also lead facilitator of AASA's equity goal. Ms. Adams-Taylor joined AASA as Director of Options for Pre-Teens, a school-based primary prevention and youth development program in urban school districts in three states. She has provided capacity-building assistance and re-granted millions of dollars to local school districts for direct services to students in these content areas to keep children in school and learning at high levels to improve their health/education/life trajectories. Last year alone, the work of the department she heads directly impacted 2.9 million students, in 53 public school districts across 28 states.



Before coming to AASA, Adams-Taylor was a senior program associate with the Children's Defense Fund, where she coordinated CDF's adolescent pregnancy prevention clearinghouse. She also provided state and local technical assistance on adolescent issues and developed and managed a national coalition of 40 youth development and education organizations focused on positive outcomes for young people.

Ms. Adams-Taylor's extensive background in training and research includes leadership positions with: The University of North Carolina's Child Health Outcomes Project, one of the first in the nation to track key indicators and monitor morbidity and mortality for several childhood diseases; and the National Head Start Resource Access Project, where she coordinated health-related training and technical assistance for 178 Head Start grantees in six states. Adams-Taylor was maternal and child health clinical director with the Virgin Islands Department of Health, project manager with the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association; and began her career as mainstreaming coordinator in the Baltimore City Public Schools.

AASA, the School Superintendents Association

AASA, the School Superintendents Association, founded in 1865, is the professional organization for more than 13,000 educational leaders in the United States and throughout the world. AASA members range from chief executive officers, superintendents and senior level school administrators to cabinet members, professors and aspiring school system leaders.



AASA members are the chief education advocates for children. AASA members advance the goals of public education and champion children's causes in their districts and nationwide. As school system leaders, AASA members set the pace for academic achievement. They help shape policy, oversee its implementation and represent school districts to the public at large.



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Pam Hoke, Member

Special Education Teacher
Sycamore Creek Elementary School

Pamela Hoke is in her 19th year as a Special Education Teacher. She has taught a K-2 Autism Classroom, Pre-K Autism Classroom for 5 years and has been teaching a self-contained 3-5 Extend Content Standards Classroom for the last 14 years. She obtained a BS and BA from Meredith College in Child Development, Social Work and a minor in Psychology. In 2016, she received an Employee Excellence Award from Wake County Public School System and in 2017 was Sycamore Creek Elementary Schools Teacher of the Year. In 2017, she also was the recipient of WRAL's Teacher of the Week Award. In 2015, she started Crocs Unified at Sycamore Creek Elementary and became a Unified Champion School club. In 2018, Crocs Unified received the National Unified Champion School Banner and was the first Elementary School to receive this award in Wake County Public School System - the largest public school system in North Carolina. Pam enjoys watching the friendships form and continue after their time at Sycamore Creek Elementary. She is married and has a 15 year old daughter, 14 year old son, a 29 year old step-son and 28 year old step daughter. Pam has a 47 year old brother on the Autism Spectrum and he is her "why" inclusion and acceptance of individuals with Intellectual Differences is so important for our youth to understand at a young age. Teaching inclusion to youth is so important because it teaches compassion and sympathy, in addition to the acceptance of differences. This increases community acceptance and increased post secondary options by diminishing the stigma that individuals with disabilities can't perform just as well as those without disabilities.



Sycamore Creek Elementary School

A Special Olympics National Banner School as of 2018.





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Lindsey Atkinson, Member

Director of Sports | Communications Associate
National Federation of State High School Associations

Lindsey Atkinson joined the NFHS staff in 2016 as a coordinator of sports, assisting with the sports of girls gymnastics, track and field, cross country and volleyball with additional responsibilities in the areas of inclusion of students with disabilities and staff liaison for tennis.

In August of 2017, Atkinson was named to the administrative staff in her current position as director of sports and communications associate. Among her duties, Atkinson serves as the staff liaison, rules interpreter and editor of rules publications in the sports of girls lacrosse and volleyball, and she is a staff writer for High School Today. She also maintains her role as staff liaison for tennis and inclusion of students with disabilities.

Atkinson spent five years as a health teacher at South Putnam High School in Greencastle, Indiana, where she was the varsity girls basketball coach, varsity volleyball coach and assistant varsity softball coach.

Prior to rejoining the NFHS staff, Atkinson spent three years as an academic advisor for both Kaplan University (now Purdue University Global) and Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI) while earning her master's degree in higher education leadership.

A DePauw University graduate, Atkinson competed on the women's basketball team for four years and the softball team for one year. She earned her bachelor's degree in kinesiology before starting her professional career with the NFHS.

Atkinson resides in Brownsburg, Indiana, with her wife, Kate, and daughter, Zoe.



National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS)

The NFHS is the national leader and advocate for high school athletics as well as fine arts and performing arts programs. Within our 51 member state associations (including Washington, D.C.), we serve 19,500 high schools and more than 12 million young people. The NFHS writes playing rules for high school sports and provides guidance on a multitude of national issues. We offer online education courses for high school coaches, officials, students, parents, and speech and music leaders through the NFHS Learning Center. We showcase high school sports and performing arts on the Internet through the NFHS Network. Ultimately, our goal is to ensure that all students have an opportunity to enjoy healthy participation, achievement and good sportsmanship in education-based activities.





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Jeff Wooten, Member

Principal

Raymond S. Kellis High School

Jeff Wooten is currently in his 9th year as the principal of Raymond S. Kellis High School in Glendale, Arizona. He grew up in central Iowa and attended Central College in Pella. He has been in education for 29 years, beginning his career as a math/computer programming teacher and coach in Yuma, AZ. He also taught and coached at North Canyon High School. He has been an administrator for 16 years at Shadow Mountain, Ironwood and RSK. He and his wife Lara have been married for 29 years and have 2 children, Paige and Blake.

Raymond S. Kellis High School



Raymond S. Kellis High School is located in Glendale, Arizona. It is a comprehensive high school with 1900 students. The demographics of the campus is very diverse as a Title 1 school with 52% free and reduced lunch, 58% Hispanic,

36% White, and 6% African American, Native American, and Asian. Many students on the campus have IEPs with 70 students part of our ABLE program for students with intellectual disabilities. It is a very inclusive campus in many ways with a focus on building student-student, student-staff, and staff-staff relationships. The Unified programming consists of classes for Unified sports, Unified dance, Unified choir and Unified band. Kellis works closely with Special Olympics Arizona to provide opportunities for our athletes and partners.

