

Convention Keynote Speakers



Dr. Jeannie Oakes
Senior Fellow, Learning Policy Institute
Presidential Professor Emeritus, UCLA

Jeannie Oakes is Presidential Professor Emeritus in Educational Equity at UCLA, where she founded UCLA's Institute for Democracy, Education, and Access; the University of California's All Campus Consortium on Research for Diversity; and Center X, UCLA's urban teacher preparation program. In 2014, she completed a 6-year term at the Ford Foundation as Director of Educational Opportunity and Scholarship programs worldwide. Oakes' scholarship examines the effect of social policies on the education of low-income students of color, and it investigates equity-minded reform. Among Oakes' numerous books, articles, and chapters, *Keeping Track: How Schools Structure Inequality* was named one of the twentieth century's "most influential" education books; and *Becoming Good American Schools: The Struggle for Civic Virtue in Education Reform* won the American Educational Research Association's (AERA) Outstanding Book Award. The 5th edition of her teacher education textbook, *Teaching to Change the World*, will be published in February. She has received other major AERA awards (Early Career, Outstanding Research Article, and Social Justice in Education Research), and holds the Lifetime Achievement Award from the California Educational Research Association: the Multicultural Research Award from the National Association for Multicultural Education, the Distinguished Achievement Award from the Educational Press Association of America, and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference's Ralph David Abernathy Award for Public Service. Oakes is a Fellow of AERA, served as AERA President in 2016 and is a Member of the National Academy of Education.

Kevin Ciak, President
National School Boards Association



Kevin E. Ciak was elected a member of the National School Boards Association's Board of Directors in April 2011. He has served as director for the Northeast Region and as NSBA Secretary-Treasurer and President-Elect. In March 2017 he was chosen as NSBA's President. He has also served as President of the New Jersey School Boards Association from 2006-08, member of the Association's Legislative Committee and Insurance Group Board of Trustees. Mr. Ciak has earned Master Board Member certification. On the local level, Ciak has been a member of the Sayreville Board of Education for over 20 years, serving continuously since the age of 19. During his tenure, he was elected by his peers for eight years as the board's president and two-and-half years as vice president. He also served two years as president and two years as vice president of the Middlesex County School Boards Association. He was inducted into the Sayreville War Memorial High School Hall of Fame in 2008 and was named New Jersey Board Member of the Year in 2013. Ciak received his B.S. in Electrical Engineering from Rutgers University. He is a Finance Manager with GE Power a division of General Electric.



Christopher Ruskowski, Secretary Designate
New Mexico Public Education Department

Christopher Ruskowski was appointed Secretary of New Mexico's Public Education Department in June 2017. Prior to that he served as Deputy Secretary, Policy & Program, overseeing the state's academic priorities, notably standards and assessment, accountability, school turnaround, educator quality, college & career readiness, math/science, early childhood/early literacy, and the charter school division. Previously he served as Associate Secretary/Chief Talent Officer at the Delaware Department of Education, leading the Teacher and Leader Effectiveness and the Race to the Top initiatives. He began his career as a middle school teacher and basketball coach at JFK Middle School in Miami, FL. He then worked in a variety of district, non-profit, and charter school contexts, partnering with within Miami-Dade County Public Schools and the Louisiana Recovery School District, and with the San Francisco Unified School District as an Education Pioneer. He attended Evans Scholarship at the University of Minnesota where he earned his B.A. in Political Science and represented the state of Minnesota as a finalist for the Rhodes Scholarship. He also studied politics and government at the University of Cape Town in South Africa. He holds an M.A. in Educational Policy, Organizational, and Leadership Studies (POLS) from Stanford University.