



CLARK COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT NEWS RELEASE

*For immediate release
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February 9, 2009

Three schools to gain “empowerment” status in 2009-2010 *Donation from Nevada Women’s Philanthropy expands program sponsorship*

LAS VEGAS – Thanks to a grant from Nevada Women’s Philanthropy (NWP) to The Public Education Foundation (PEF), the Clark County School District is receiving the funds necessary to sponsor three new empowerment schools starting in the 2009-2010 school year.

Three schools – Chaparral High School, Wendell Williams Elementary School and Ethel Staton Elementary School – are being added to the empowerment schools roster. Each school will receive \$50,000 from NWP during each of the next three school years, totaling \$450,000.

Clark County School District Superintendent Walt Rulffes said, “Empowerment gives schools the resources and authority necessary to create solutions for their unique circumstances. In these difficult economic times, this generous donation from NWP allows us to expand the positive impact of empowerment schools in southern Nevada.”

NWP was founded in 2005 by six women with a vision for venture philanthropy where all monies collected would go directly to a local charity that is selected annually by its members. It is a member-driven, pooled-fund philanthropy dedicated to providing large impact grants that serve critical unmet needs in the Las Vegas community. The group now has 80 members, each of whom donates \$5,000 annually and has an equal vote at the end of the granting cycle.

The PEF is a non-profit organization dedicated to mobilizing global and community resources to support and impact public education through initiatives, programs and practices designed to improve student performance and advance quality educational opportunities for all children.

In January 2008, the PEF submitted a proposal to NWP for the empowerment school initiative. After nearly a year-long, intense and competitive review process, the foundation was awarded the grant in November 2008.

“We are very proud to have secured the resources needed to expand the empowerment schools initiative,” said Judi Steele, president and chief professional officer of the PEF. “This partnership demonstrates how the power of collaboration between the public and private sectors impacts our education system. Clark County’s empowerment model is demonstrating results and holds the promise of transforming our schools in a meaningful and lasting way.”

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With the new additions, 17 schools will participate in the empowerment school program as of 2009-2010. The program began in 2006 as part of CCSD's Superintendent's Schools. Empowerment schools are given autonomy regarding governance, budget, staffing, instruction and time with the expectation that they will demonstrate annual progress toward increased student learning. The CCSD Empowerment School model was designed as a systemic reform effort to increase student achievement, involvement in the educational process and responsiveness to the ever-changing needs of the community, as well as a means of providing additional resources and pioneering pay-for performance. Using a combination of CCSD funding and a multi-year, multi-million dollar donation from the Lincy Foundation, a strong community partner, CCSD has been able to initiate and expand this transformational educational endeavor.

In addition, through the generous efforts of the PEF, each empowerment school has been matched with a community partner. Schools benefit from available expertise when the community is involved in the process of public education through mentors, volunteers, connections, resources and a variety of other support. The experience of 2008-09 community partners (Mark L. Fine & Associates, Greenspun Family Foundation, Terry & Debbie Lanni, Duncan & Irene Lee, the Lincy Foundation, MGM Mirage, Maureen & Phil Peckman, the Venetian Foundation and Wells Fargo) suggests that pride of participation can be felt in a myriad of ways.

Last December, a total of 14 schools submitted empowerment school proposals that outlined how their schools would employ the five autonomies (governance, budget, staffing, instruction and time) to address the needs of the school community and increase the achievement of students. To be considered for empowerment, at least 70 percent of the school's licensed personnel, voting by secret ballot, had to support the proposal. After site visits to the six finalist schools, the Central Design Team (CDT), together with representatives of NWP, made the final recommendations based on leadership, collaborative culture and strength of the proposal.

According to Superintendent's Schools Academic Manager Jeremy Hauser, "The CCSD empowerment model is transformational. It places resources and decision-making in the hands of those who are best equipped to meet the changing educational and social needs of their children -- the school community."

For more information about the Clark County School District, visit www.ccsd.net. To learn more about Nevada Women's Philanthropy, go to www.nvwomensphilanthropy.org. For more information on The Public Education Foundation, visit www.ThePEF.org.

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