

## 2003 National Distinguished Principals



### **Jay S. Hollinger**

McAuliffe Elementary School  
McAllen Independent School District  
McAllen, Texas

Since Scott Hollinger became principal of McAuliffe Elementary in 1998, he has nurtured a close-knit school community by establishing practices such as the morning assemblies. At McAuliffe, each day begins with a schoolwide gathering in the gym, often attended by students' parents, grandparents, and even siblings in strollers. All sing the National Anthem, recite the Pledge of Allegiance, exchange greetings, share announcements, and recognize accomplishments and birthdays. Despite the fact that his suburban Pre-K-5 school serves 835 students, Hollinger says, "We are a family at McAuliffe." He has coauthored a social skills curriculum that emphasizes building relationships with students by showing respect for them at all times. To foster bonds among teachers, he includes social activities and celebrations in the agendas of every faculty meeting. He also carved out a two-hour period every day--called TALL time (for "Teachers as Lifelong Learners")--in which small groups of teachers meet to plan lessons and activities, discuss student needs, administer assessments, or tutor students. The author of a dissertation on parent involvement, Hollinger set aside a classroom to house a parent center in his school. He has B.A., B.S., and M.A. degrees from Ohio State University and an Ed.D. from the University of Texas-Pan American at Edinburg.



### **Pamela S. Park**

Orchard Elementary School  
Davis School District  
North Salt Lake, Utah

Two years ago, Pam Park sensed that teachers at Orchard Elementary were losing enthusiasm for their work. So she arranged a luncheon event that surprised them with energizing activities such as relay races. The next year, they had a "room rally" featuring clues that led to prizes. After participating in a number of such team-building activities, Park's staff is rejuvenated and united--and she has earned the nickname of "Party Pammy." "It's hard to believe that a few years ago this faculty was tired, distrustful, and disenchanting," says Park. "We now know that working together we can take on any challenge, be successful, and have fun." As principal of the suburban K-6 school since 1994, Park sees herself as a "potential promoter, instilling confidence in teachers, parents, and more than 700 students, and also as a "beautification builder," lifting spirits by enhancing the school environment with colorful paint, bright lights, new ceiling tiles and carpeting, a student art gallery, a nature center, and music in the hallways. She believes that the higher test scores during her tenure reflect the "I can" attitudes she has fostered in teachers and students. Her B.S. is from Westminster College in Salt Lake City and her M.Ed. is from Brigham Young University in Utah.



### **Jacqueline A. Parks**

Manchester Elementary-Middle School  
Manchester School District  
Manchester Center, Vermont

In 1999, when Jackie Parks became principal of Manchester Elementary-Middle School, she found some of the best teachers were ready to leave, fed up with "an atmosphere of negativity and distrust" at the rural K-8 school. She also found that two major instructional reforms that had previously been initiated--a research-based literacy program and a middle school instructional model--were disorganized and poorly integrated. Determined to establish and maintain a positive climate for the school's 497 students, Parks worked hard to build trust with staff and parents. She made her goal clear to her teachers, putting some of them on improvement plans and counseling others into retirement. All core curriculums were reviewed and rewritten in a standards-based format and teachers were required to take classes in skillful teaching. As a result, she says, "Veteran teachers now tell me that this is the best school climate they have ever worked in." Parks also effectively reorganized the two initiatives she had inherited, providing resources, training, and support to teachers. Writing and reading scores in grades K-4 have risen significantly over the past five years and the school now has one of the top middle school programs in the state. She holds a B.A. from Trinity College of

Vermont and an M.A. from Castleton State College in Vermont.



**Melody T. McCloud**

Robert R. Moton Elementary School  
Hampton City Schools  
Hampton, Virginia

Since Melody McCloud became principal of Robert R. Moton Elementary School in 1997, the staff and 272 students have seen wide-ranging improvements. Perhaps more important, she has nurtured fundamental changes in the urban K-5 school's culture, converting a previously negative climate into one that supports and values all children. She has empowered teachers to make instructional revisions that have contributed to significant gains in student achievement. The first graders' 2002 literacy test scores ranked second in the state out of 915 schools with similar populations. Although more than 80 percent of Moton Elementary's students come from low-income households and the school receives Title I funding, McCloud is especially proud that her school has achieved full accreditation, "given the obstacles impeding academic success." With her leadership and strong parental support, Moton successfully implemented a uniform dress policy that "helps students to focus on learning rather than on what is worn to school." She also improved school safety by relocating the main office from the rear to the front of the building, ensuring that visitors can be more easily identified and monitored. She has a B.S. from Virginia State University and an M.S. from Old Dominion University in Virginia.



**Linda M. Boggs**

Blue Ridge Elementary School  
Walla Walla School District No. 140  
Walla Walla, Washington

For Linda Boggs, the pleasures of being an elementary principal include making "The Walk of Fame" down the school hall with Accelerated Reader award winners, playing games with students during recess, making phone calls to parents with good news, and "laughing at myself during a staff meeting." In her 12 years at Blue Ridge Elementary, including eight as principal, Boggs has made a warm and caring learning environment a top priority. "A positive climate, positive relationships, and positive decision-making typify what I believe is the role of the principal," she says. "We are a 'family' at Blue Ridge. When something wonderful happens, we all join in the celebration." Although more than three-quarters of the 303 students at the K-5 school are still learning English and 86 percent live in poverty, a school improvement plan reinforced by a variety of innovations has produced steady gains in student achievement. These include an extended school day and accelerated instruction for struggling kindergartners, after-school reading and math instruction, reduced class sizes, and summer school. Boggs also fosters teacher leadership by creating a school council that makes instructional decisions. "I utilize their expertise by getting out of their way and letting them reach for the stars," she says. Boggs received her B.Ed. and M.Ed. from Eastern Washington University.



**Freda A. Harless**

Berlin McKinney Elementary  
Wyoming County School District  
Oceana, West Virginia

"Self-esteem and confidence are my main priorities," says Freda Harless of her 16-year leadership of staff and students at Berlin McKinney Elementary. She has successfully encouraged teachers at her rural Pre-K-4 school to pursue professional development, a process she reinforces with monthly reports of strategies and practices she has discovered through reading professional journals, visiting other schools, and networking with other educational leaders. Harless has integrated elements of Effective Schools research into a curriculum she believes is "one of the best" and tries throughout the year to communicate to staff, parents, and the community her high expectations for academic achievement by the school's 385 students. An early effort over a three-year period saw her students' performance on standardized tests of basic skills rise by 35 percentile points, giving her school the third-highest ranking in the state for academic gains. Under her leadership, McKinney Elementary has been honored by its selection as a Title I Distinguished School, as a West Virginia School of Excellence, and last year as a National Blue Ribbon School of Excellence. Harless holds a B.A. and M.A. from Marshall University in West Virginia.

