AASA Commended for Efforts to Fight Childhood Obesity in La Mesa, Calif.

January 23, 2008

Contact:
Amy Vogt
Manager, Communications and Media Relations
703-875-0723
avogt@aasa.org

ARLINGTON, Va. – The American Association of School Administrators (AASA) has received an official commendation from La Mesa, Calif., Mayor Art Madrid, Vice Mayor Ernest Ewin and the La Mesa city council for its work to fight childhood obesity. For more than 30 years, AASA has worked with school leaders on prominent issues that affect children’s health and academic success.

AASA is conducting a one-year technical assistance initiative with the city of La Mesa and the La Mesa-Spring Valley School District, and five other city-school teams across the nation. The initiative receives financial support from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, through its Leadership for Healthy Communities national program. In La Mesa, AASA collaborates with the National League of Cities’ (NLC) Institute for Youth, Education and Families to provide teams of municipal and school leaders with peer learning opportunities, consultations with national experts in the field, and technical assistance from AASA and NLC.

“AASA’s work to improve children’s health in schools stems from our dedication to improving the overall quality of life for every child,” said AASA Executive Director Paul D. Houston. “It is critical that schools and communities join together to develop local wellness policies that create healthier environments for all children. The Leadership for Healthy Communities initiative is creating models for those collaborations.”

In addition to the La Mesa city-school team, five other city-school teams from across the country were competitively selected to participate in the project:

- Charleston, S.C., and Charleston County School District
- Jackson, Tenn., and Jackson Madison County Schools
- Oakland, Calif., and Oakland Unified School District
- San Antonio, Texas, and Harlandale Independent School District
- Savannah, Ga., and Savannah-Chatham County Public Schools

Working with local partner organizations, AASA is encouraging school superintendents to improve local district policies and practices to prevent childhood obesity, especially in communities where children are at the highest risk for obesity.

Through the initiative, AASA has visited and shared the stories of local school districts, brought school leaders together with local governments to brainstorm wellness challenges, opportunities and strategies, funded AASA state affiliates to address wellness issues in their states, and encouraged cities and local school districts to collaborate during local wellness policy development.

“We know that student health is inextricably linked to student achievement,” said AASA President
Sarah D. Jerome, superintendent of schools in Arlington Heights, Ill. “Encouraging active living and healthy eating in our schools and our communities contributes to the well-being, development and achievement of all students.”

In December 2007, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation awarded AASA a two-year, $501,162 grant to continue its work with Leadership for Healthy Communities. The grant will help AASA support school leaders in developing and implementing policies and programs that will create healthier schools and communities.

About AASA
The American Association of School Administrators, founded in 1865, is the professional organization for more than 13,000 educational leaders across the United States. AASA’s mission is to support and develop effective school system leaders who are dedicated to the highest quality public education for all children. AASA’s major focus is standing up for public education.

As part of the overall mission of the association, AASA supports strong school system leadership to improve the lives of children. The association’s current health projects focus on asthma management, healthy school environments, youth development and healthy eating and active living, with a major emphasis on disparities or gaps in well-being among children from low-income families. For more information, visit www.aasa.org/focus.

About Leadership for Healthy Communities
Leadership for Healthy Communities: Advancin...