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American Schools are Tapping into Students' Ideas to Inform Local Education Decision-making

National education nonprofit recognizes top 200 schools for empowering students' voices in education

IRVINE, CA. (May 11, 2009) -- Project Tomorrow® (www.tomorrow.org), the national education nonprofit group, announced this year's Speak Up 200, a collection of top K-12 schools in the country that encourage and involve authentic student, parent and teacher ideas and views in education planning and decision-making. These schools are selected for this national distinction from the 18,000 schools nationwide that have participated in the annual Speak Up surveys since 2003. The Speak Up National Research Project collects K-12 student, parent and educator viewpoints on technology and 21st century education through an annual online survey process and shares that data with national, state and local policymakers to improve education for all children. The Speak Up data is especially valuable this year as it gives our education leaders important input as to how to spend the historic education stimulus funds provided by the federal government.

Over 330,000 K-12 students, teachers, administrators and parents, representing 4,379 schools in all 50 states participated in the most recent Speak Up surveys which were open for participation in fall 2008. The schools selected for the 2009 Speak Up 200 recognition this year represent a broad range of educational institutions in rural, suburban and urban communities from all across the United States including schools on our military bases worldwide. The complete list of Speak Up 200 recognized schools are highlighted on the Project Tomorrow® website at

http://www.tomorrow.org/speakup/speakup_200.html.

Based upon total participation and demonstrated commitment to engaging their stakeholders in local decisions on education issues, five school districts were additionally recognized for special distinction:

Top 5 school districts (based on high level of participation in Speak Up)

- Klein Independent School District (Texas)
- Baltimore City Public Schools (Maryland)
- Clear Creek Independent School District (Texas)

- City of Chicago School District (Illinois)
- Capistrano Unified School District (California)

Top performing district for parent participation in the surveys

- Capistrano Unified School District (California)

Top performing district for administrator participation in the surveys

- Klein Independent School District (Texas)

"As our education leaders make plans for how to spend the historic education stimulus funds, we are very encouraged to know that some of the most innovative districts in our country are using the ideas of students as well as parents and teachers as input into their decision-making, says Julie Evans, CEO of Project Tomorrow®. By empowering student voices, the Speak Up 200 schools provide the education community with powerful examples of the value of including stakeholders in these important discussions around education transformation and school improvement."

Speak Up 200 schools are using the data collected through the Speak Up surveys to develop strategic plans, make budgeting decisions, enhance their curriculum, and determine professional development needs. This year schools and districts shared some of their strategies for using Speak Up data to inform their decisions about the economic stimulus funding that will soon be available:

"Speak Up data has made us aware that students' favor using digital tools to learn and work, both in and out of school. We anticipate using some stimulus money to purchase equipment, software and/or online access to programs which will help teach and develop skills necessary for success in the 21st century." **Paul Caputo, supervisor of curriculum, technology and federal programs, North Schuylkill Elementary (PA)**

"The professional development for teachers in the fall will reflect what needs the teachers feel are most important so they can more effectively incorporate technology into their everyday teaching." **Holly Blythe, instructional technology coordinator, (AR)**

"Will use student data to substantiate the need to incorporate more technology into instruction." **Linda Brandon, director of instructional technology, Lakeland Central School District (NY)**

"If stimulus money is awarded to our state, the Speak Up data would provide another piece of data for our decision making process on using the funds." **Deb Sixel, director of student learning, Kiel Area School District (WI)**

This year's Speak Up 200 schools are prominently featured on the Project Tomorrow® website (http://www.tomorrow.org/speakup/speakup_200.html) and receive special recognition from Project Tomorrow® including a unique Speak Up 200 logo to include on their school and district websites. Project Tomorrow® will promote the school's distinction

to the Congressional representative and state Governor of each Speak Up 200 school to demonstrate the power of educational innovation at the local level. Project Tomorrow[®] is tapping into the expertise of this year's Speak Up 200 schools to develop new questions for Speak Up 2009 which will open up for student, teacher and parent input in October. Additionally, their success stories are being shared with our partners and national policy organizations to inform national and regional education reform efforts.

About Project Tomorrow[®]

Project Tomorrow[®] (formerly known as NetDay) is a national education nonprofit organization committed to ensuring that all students are well prepared to become tomorrow's innovators, leaders and engaged citizens. The mission of Project Tomorrow[®] is to support and promote the effective and appropriate use of science, math and technology resources in K-12 education so that every student has the opportunity to fully participate in today's global economy and community. For additional information, visit: www.tomorrow.org.

About the Speak Up National Research Project

Speak Up, a national research initiative of Project Tomorrow[®], has surveyed over 1.5 million K-12 students, parents, teachers and school leaders since 2003. The Speak Up data represents the largest collection of authentic, unfiltered stakeholder input on education, technology, 21st century skills, and math and science instruction. Education, business and policy leaders regularly use the data to inform federal, state and local education programs. Speak Up 2008 was made possible through the generous support of CDW-G, SMART Technologies, PASCOCO scientific, The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, 1105 Media Education Group and Wimba. Outreach support was provided from over 100 national education groups including the State Education Technology Directors' Association (SETDA), Consortium for School Network (CoSN) and the National School Boards' Association (NSBA).

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