

# awardsoverview2026

## Program Overview

Each year, ACSA recognizes a select group of individuals for their significant contributions to education through three prestigious awards named in memory of past ACSA leaders:

- **Ferd. Kiesel Distinguished Service Award**
- **Marcus Foster Memorial Award**
- **Robert E. Kelly Award**

In addition, members are honored for outstanding performance and achievement as **Administrators of the Year** in different job-alike categories.

The **Valuing Diversity Award** is given to the member whose efforts to promote diversity epitomize ACSA's mission statement.

Programs and businesses that collaborate with administrators in support of education are also recognized through the **Partners in Educational Excellence Award**.

Students of all grade levels are recognized through the **Every Student Succeeding Program**, designed to honor students who have succeeded against all odds.

Awards will be presented at ACSA's 2026 Leadership Summit.

## Deadlines

- **The deadline for submission of all nominations to ACSA will be January 22, 2026 at 11:59 p.m. through the online awards platform.**
- **The deadline for regions to submit finalists to the state will be February 12, 2026 at 11:59 p.m.**

## How to Get Help

**With questions or for assistance, contact:**

**Emily Agpoon, ACSA Awards Program**

**916.329.3833 (phone or text) • [eagpoon@acsa.org](mailto:eagpoon@acsa.org)**

**To access nomination forms and for FAQs, tips and other resources, please visit [www.acsa.org/awards](http://www.acsa.org/awards)**

## Timeline

The awards program takes place over a calendar year, beginning in August:

- **Aug. 1:** The nomination period opens.
- **Jan. 22, 2026:** Nominations are due to each region through the online platform. Regions select their recipients and state finalists.
- **Feb. 12, 2026:** State finalist selections are due to state ACSA.
- **March:** Every Student Succeeding honorees are submitted to state ACSA.
- **April:** The Awards Committee meets to select state recipients and the recipients are approved by the Board. Recipients for that year are announced.
- **June to November:** Recipients are featured in EdCal stories and online.
- **Nov. 2026:** Recipients are honored at the Leadership Summit Awards Ceremony and ESS recognition event.

## Nomination Forms & the Online Platform

All nominations will be completed through the online Awards platform, accessible through the Awards Program website or directly at: <http://acsa.awardsplatform.com>.

Updated demos of the new system will be available this summer under Help & Resources at <http://www.acsa.org/awards>.

Only the Every Student Succeeding Award nomination will continue to be a fillable PDF form, available on the Awards Program website.

## [www.acsa.org/awards](http://www.acsa.org/awards)

Resources available on the Awards Program website include FAQs, tips, video demos and State award archives.

In addition, any updates to the program, important dates and announcements will be posted on this page.

# State Special Awards

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Special awards recognized at the state level only.

## Ferd. J. Kiesel Memorial Distinguished Service Award

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**Purpose.** The Ferd. Kiesel Memorial Distinguished Service Award is the highest honor ACSA can present to an individual. The award is made in the memory of Ferd. Kiesel, ACSA's founding president.

**Eligibility.** The recipient can be anyone who has made a significant contribution to public education, including an administrator, teacher, legislator or community member. Current ACSA employees and ACSA board members are not eligible to receive this award.

Criteria for granting the award include: 1) the contribution has had significant impact on public education over a wide geographical area; and 2) the contribution has had impact on significant segments of public education.

Although it may not be as important as the contribution itself, the time a person has been involved with education also is considered.

**Nomination Process.** All nominations must be submitted through ACSA's online Awards Platform directly to the committee.

The Awards Committee reviews and considers all nominations and makes recommendations to the Board of Directors which makes the final selection. The award is presented at ACSA's Leadership Summit in November.

**Deadline.** Deadline for online submission of nominations is **January 22, 2026**.

## Marcus Foster Memorial Award for Administrator Excellence

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**Purpose.** This award recognizes outstanding leadership and significant contributions to education by a school administrator. It was established to honor the memory of Marcus Foster, former superintendent of the Oakland Unified School District.

Recipients of this award receive a \$5,000 grant for a designated high school senior or seniors.

**Eligibility.** The recipient should be an ACSA member who personifies the ideals of Marcus Foster and be an administrator who is a skilled manager of change; has a management style that involves many sectors of the community and includes broad professional involvement; is willing to take risks to improve educational opportunities; is creative, willing to try new ideas and reaches out to children; speaks out in his or her community on issues that have an impact on children; respects all people, especially children, as human beings; and protects the rights of all people to have full citizenship. Current ACSA employees and ACSA board members are not eligible to receive this award.

**Nomination Process.** All nominations must be submitted through ACSA's online Awards Platform directly to the committee. Nominations can be made by any member of ACSA, charter groups, committees or regions.

The Awards Committee reviews and considers all nominations and makes recommendations to the Board of Directors, which makes the final selection. The award is presented at ACSA's Leadership Summit in November.

**Deadline.** Deadline for online submission of nominations is **January 22, 2026**.

# Special Awards

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Special awards recognized at both region and state levels.

## Robert E. Kelly Award for Outstanding Community Service

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**Purpose.** This award is made in memory of Robert E. Kelly, former superintendent of Los Angeles Unified School District. Robert Kelly was instrumental in establishing the Los Angeles City Schools Bank of America Achievement Awards program in 1948.

The recipient of this award should be an individual who, upon retirement, contributes significantly to public education or educational leadership by volunteer work in his or her community.

**Eligibility.** The recipient must: 1) be an ACSA retired member, and have been retired for a minimum of three years; 2) have made significant contributions to the community on a volunteer basis; and 3) directly or indirectly helped advance the high quality of public education or educational leadership in California. Current ACSA employees and ACSA board members are not eligible to receive this award.

**Nomination Process.** Nominations for the Robert E. Kelly Award must be submitted through ACSA's online awards platform, <http://acsa.awardsplatform.com>.

Each region convenes an awards committee to review all nominations. The region president forwards the region's nominee to the state Awards Committee for consideration. After reviewing all nominations, the state Awards Committee recommends a single recipient to the state Board of Directors, which makes the final selection. Recipients are honored at ACSA's Leadership Summit in November.

**Deadline.** Deadline for online submission of all nominations is **January 22, 2026**.

## Valuing Diversity Award

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**Purpose.** This award is given to an administrator who epitomizes ACSA's Mission Statement by his/her efforts in promoting diversity and support for all of the children, parents and staff at their school or district.

**Eligibility.** The recipient must be an active ACSA member who has exemplified outstanding leadership in developing and implementing programs that have enhanced the support and value of student diversity.

The administrator who receives this award should be one who: 1) fosters positive district office and school climates that promote the awareness and celebration of diversity; 2) empowers and supports staff to take risks in developing programs for all students; 3) develops strong community partnerships to ensure success for all students; 4) models

and values the maintenance of high academic standards for all students; 5) shares pertinent information regarding diversity with parent and professional organizations. Current ACSA employees and ACSA board members are not eligible to receive this award.

**Nomination Process.** Nominations for the Valuing Diversity Award must be submitted through ACSA's online awards platform, <http://acsa.awardsplatform.com>.

Each region convenes an awards committee to review all nominations. The region president forwards the region's nominee to the state Awards Committee for consideration. After reviewing all nominations, the state Awards Committee recommends a single recipient to the state Board of Directors, which makes the final selection. Recipients are honored at ACSA's Leadership Summit in November.

**Deadline.** Deadline for online submission of all nominations is **January 22, 2026**.

## Partners in Educational Excellence

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**Purpose.** The Partners in Educational Excellence Award is given annually to exemplary school-community partnership programs that promote effective educational performance, enhanced student achievement and strong community involvement in educational quality.

**Eligibility.** This award is granted to outstanding community partnership programs at region and state levels, and recognize the individual leadership and contributions of school administrators, educators and community or business leaders involved in the program. Current ACSA employees and ACSA board members are not eligible to receive this award.

**Nomination Process.** Nominations for the Partners in Educational Excellence awards must be submitted through ACSA's online awards platform.

Each region convenes an awards committee to review all nominations. The region president forwards the region's nominee to the state Awards Committee for consideration.

After reviewing all nominations, the state Awards Committee recommends a single recipient to the state Board of Directors, which makes the final selection. Recipients are honored at ACSA's Leadership Summit in November.

**Deadline.** Deadline for online submission of all nominations is **January 22, 2026**.

# AOY & ESS Awards

Administrator and student awards recognized at both region and state levels.

## Administrator of the Year Awards

**Purpose.** These awards recognize outstanding performance and achievement by individual administrators, classified managers or confidential employees in the following categories:

- Superintendent
- Secondary Principal
- Middle Grades Principal
- Elementary Principal
- Central Office Administrator (District/County)
- Secondary Co-Administrator
- Middle Grades Co-Administrator
- Elementary Co-Administrator
- Classified Leader
- Confidential Employee
- Personnel/Human Resources Administrator
- Adult Education Administrator
- Career Technical Education Administrator
- Special Education Administrator
- Superintendent/Principal
- Business Services Administrator
- Student Services Administrator
- Curriculum and Instruction Administrator
- Continuation/Educational Options Administrator
- Professor of Education
- Retired Administrator (Volunteer Service to ACSA)
- Technology Administrator

If you have questions regarding the eligibility of a nominee within a category, please contact the Awards Coordinator.

**Eligibility.** Recipients must be active ACSA members who demonstrate commitment to an equitable education system and to meeting the diverse needs of all students and school communities; exceptional leadership in implementing, managing and supporting school programs; commitment to educational quality and student achievement; commitment to professional growth, ethics and innovation; commitment to nurturing and sustaining a safe and inclusive learning environment. Current ACSA employees and ACSA board members are not eligible to receive these awards.

**Nomination Process.** Nominations for Administrator of the Year awards must be submitted through ACSA's online awards platform, <http://acsa.awardsplatform.com>.

Each region convenes an awards committee to review all nominations. The region president forwards the region's nominee in each category to the state Awards Committee for consideration as a state finalist.

After reviewing all nominations, the state Awards Committee recommends one nominee in each category to the state Board of Directors, which makes the final selection. Recipients are honored at ACSA's Leadership Summit in November.

**Deadline.** Deadline for online submission of all nominations is **January 22, 2026**.

## Every Student Succeeding Awards

**Purpose.** The purpose of this award is to honor students at all grade levels (pre-K to adult education) who have succeeded against all odds, beyond expectations or simply won the hearts of the administrators and other educators who helped them achieve their goals. One student from each region will be honored.

**Eligibility.** Nominees should be students who have made a special effort to succeed and have overcome obstacles such as:

- Returning to school
- Leaving a gang
- Improving their attendance
- Changing their attitude
- Overcoming physical and mental barriers

They should also be active in:

- After school programs
- Community service
- Student conflict resolution
- Cross-age tutoring
- Peer mediation
- Peer tutoring

Nominees can come from programs such as:

- Alternative Education
- At-risk
- Bilingual
- Continuation School

**Nomination Process.** Nominations must be submitted directly to the nominee's region. Each region will select one student recipient and honor them at region events throughout the year.

Nomination forms are available for download on the ACSA website at [www.acsa.org/awards](http://www.acsa.org/awards) under the tab Nomination Forms.

Students will be honored at ACSA's Leadership Summit in November, as well as at various regional events.

**Deadline.** Contact your region leadership for the region deadline. Deadline for submission of recipient information to state ACSA by region leadership is **March 2, 2026**.