



newsroom

NASBE Honors Maine State Board of Education Chair Fern Desjardins with Distinguished Service Award

NASBE | National Association of
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Congratulations!

Fern Desjardins
Maine State Board of Education Chair

2023 DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD
RECIPIENT

The [National Association of State Boards of Education](#) (NASBE) has awarded Maine State Board of Education Chair Fern Desjardins the 2023 Distinguished Service Award. This national award honors current and former state board members who have made exceptional contributions to education. It represents one of the highest awards NASBE can bestow on a state board of education member.

Fern Desjardins currently chairs the Maine State Board of Education. She came to the state board in 2018 after a more than 40-year career in public education, first as a classroom teacher and then as a principal and superintendent in a rural school system. The U.S. Department of Education named Dr. Levesque Elementary a Blue Ribbon School during her tenure as its principal. Desjardins taught graduate courses at the University of Maine as an adjunct faculty member for almost a decade, was a member of the Maine Small Schools Coalition and the Maine Department of Education's Multilingual Learner Advisory Council, and was a grant reader for Maine's 21st Century Community Learning Centers Program.

"Beyond Fern's formal titles and responsibilities, she is simply a person of great character who cares deeply about students, educators, and our state," said fellow board member Kristin Bishop. "She models a genuine commitment to public service and a desire to contribute to the common good, one that is central to her identity and the work she holds dear; it is clear that education is her calling."

A thoughtful, purposeful board leader, Desjardins has represented the board and its strategic plan in legislative testimony and has participated in at least five educator preparation program reviews. She also chairs the School Construction Committee and has been involved in other standing and ad hoc committees, including Certification and Higher Education, Legislative Action, and Student Membership. She previously served four years as board representative to the Maine Charter School Commission.

Desjardins is also an engaged member of NASBE. She was elected to be the new member

representative on NASBE’s Board of Directors and served in this role for two years before becoming secretary-treasurer in 2021. In that same year, her keen interest in formulating policy and the governance of education led to her chairing the organization’s Public Education Positions Committee. She has participated in NASBE conferences and events and presented to fellow members about state board strategic planning and school building maintenance and construction.

“Fern exemplifies what it means to be the citizen’s voice in education,” said NASBE President and CEO Paolo DeMaria. “She is a passionate, dedicated public servant and her impact on public education in Maine will be felt for years to come. We are delighted to honor her with the 2023 Distinguished Service Award.”

NASBE’s full slate of annual awards will be presented during its [Annual Conference](#) in San Diego, California, October 25-28, 2023.

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