



AESA

ASSOCIATION OF
EDUCATIONAL SERVICE AGENCIES

*Making a
Difference*

**Spotlighting How ESAs Impact
the Nation's Education System
2022**

Spotlight on Visionary Leadership

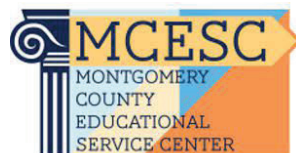
The theme for the 2022 AESA Summer Leadership Conference and Annual Conference centers on *innovation and futuristic thinking*. Montgomery County ESC's Superintendent Shannon Cox's story inspires us to become visionary leaders in times of uncertainty.

Montgomery County Educational Service Center (Montgomery County ESC) describes itself as "Visionary Leaders Providing Exemplary Service." And the visionary leadership starts at the top.



SHANNON COX

Montgomery County ESC's Superintendent, Shannon Cox, is the first woman to hold that position. In her first four years she has been responsible for a long list of accomplishments, culminating in her recognition as winner of the 2021 Justus A. Prentice Award presented by the Association of Educational Service Agencies (AESA). This award recognizes outstanding executive leadership.



According to Cox, her personal philosophy of leadership is to be an "innate servant leader."

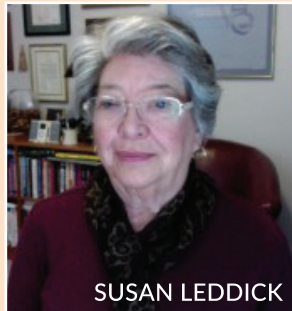
"I believe we are put on this earth to make others be the best they can be," she said, adding that her motivation comes from "finding the harmony in life."

She and her team at Montgomery County ESC work to embrace both an immediate and a long-term vision for their clients. "We try to have that vision of what we should be providing that our clients don't even know they need yet," she explained.

"I believe we are put on this earth to make others be the best they can be."

- Shannon Cox, Montgomery County Educational Service Center

- continued on back page -



SUSAN LEDDICK

Dedication to a Visionary Leader

In Memory of Susan Leddick

This edition of *ESAs Making a Difference* is dedicated to Susan Leddick, an AESA partner and inspirational leader who made a lasting difference in AESA. Susan passed away unexpectedly in December 2021.

Susan whole-heartedly believed in the work delivered by ESAs and she helped countless ESAs with training and strategy.

As the CEO of PKR, Inc., she demonstrated that effective and visionary leadership are essential elements of effective systems. Her legacy lives on through the people she collaborated with and trained in systems thinking and the business strategy framework.

We honor her dedication to leadership and ESAs, as we feature the 2021 AESA award winners and their contributions to educational excellence.

Joan H. Wade EdD

AESA Executive Director
(920) 420-8822
jwade@aesa.us



California Agencies Awarded for Their Work to Support All Students

During the 2021-22 school year, AESA was proud to travel to a California statewide event, and recognize several California agencies for their range of work to support all students during the recent pandemic.

Each year, AESA honors leaders from around the U.S. for their contributions to educational excellence. This year, many award winners came from California for their collaboration and innovation during the pandemic.

Brian L. Talbott Award for Technological Advancement & Support

Los Angeles County Office of Education Technology Services Team

The Department was honored for its work with local school districts to support students involved in the juvenile court and foster care systems during the COVID-19 pandemic. Specifically, the Department was recognized for creating the Juvenile Court Schools Online Learning System, a secure virtual platform for hundreds of students in the county's juvenile halls and camps.

When schools closed, the system allowed students to continue their education through a user friendly and secure digital environment. In addition, the department created the Educational Passport System (EPS) in partnership with the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS).

The EPS provides all 80 county K-12 districts and DCFS with a centralized database of demographic and academic information for foster youth.



Serving Students • Supporting Communities • Leading Educators

Justus Prentice Award For Executive Leadership

Dr. Paul Gothold

Gothold is superintendent of the San Diego County Office of Education (SDCOE). He was selected for the award because of his efforts in setting up educational services for migrant children being held in emergency intake centers as immigration levels surged to record numbers.

The first such center was established at the San Diego Convention Center in San Diego, California. Under Gothold's direction, the SDCOE set up Futuro Brillante, or Bright Future, a program staffed by their own employees and contractors. In a matter of days, the program was up and running with staff developing curricula in English and Spanish, printing and delivering instructional materials to the center and providing other types of support.



E. Robert Stephens Award For Research, Writing and Publications

Dr. Mary Ann Dewan

Dewan is superintendent of the Santa Clara Office of Education. She received the award in recognition of her role in the development of the *Ways 2 Equity Playbook*, which was released by the Santa Clara County Office of Education in 2020. The publication is a guide designed to assist schools and districts with assessing and strengthening their efforts to achieve equity. It includes background on the challenge of equity as well as resources and strategies for targeting specific issues such as absenteeism, suspensions, and student and family engagement. The publication focuses on issues faced by African American students, English language learners, and students with disabilities.



Justus Prentice Award For Executive Leadership

Dr. Debra Duardo

Duardo is superintendent of the Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE). She was recognized for her efforts in setting up educational services for migrant children being held in emergency intake centers as immigration levels surged to record numbers. Duardo developed a program to provide curriculum and instructional materials in Spanish and English a week after the office was notified that migrant students would be arriving in Los Angeles. The LACOE provided services to two intake centers serving thousands of students. In addition, LACOE staff reached out to local school districts to let them know that they were ready and willing to support any efforts to provide educational services to migrant children.



Serving Students • Supporting Communities • Leading Educators



The AESA Justus Prentice Award For Executive Leadership was awarded to Dr. Debra Duardo, County Superintendent of Schools, Los Angeles County Office of Education and Dr. Paul Gothold, Superintendent of the San Diego County Office of Education (featured middle of photo, L to R). Dr. Mary Ann Dewan, Superintendent of the Santa Clara Office of Education, was awarded the E. Robert Stephens Award For Research, Writing, and Publications (right). John Bass, AESA Chief Operating Officer, (left) presented the awards.



Visionary Leadership *(continued)*

Supporting SEL before it was widespread

Recognizing the need to support social and emotional learning in students long before the issue came to widespread national attention, Cox led a team to create an SEL curriculum fully integrated with language arts writing standards so that social emotional learning could become part of instruction rather than “just another thing” added to a teacher’s plate of responsibility.

In addition, she created a partnership with singer/songwriter Jewel to expand the initiative now known as SELLA (social emotional learning language arts), which is available to schools nationwide.

Community Drug-Free Coalition

Among her achievements is co-founding a Community Drug-Free Coalition to combat an epidemic of opioid abuse in the Dayton, Ohio area. She also coordinated Montgomery County ESC efforts with the local drug addiction and mental health board and created a Schools of Excellence in Prevention program.

Neurosequential Model Preschool

Another notable achievement was development of NM (Neurosequential Model) Preschool, which provides support for children at risk for social, emotional, and behavioral challenges. The Neurosequential Model was developed by Dr. Bruce Parry and focuses on individual children’s development, integrating neuro-development and traumatology. The program is the only one of its kind in the country.

Career Planning & Opportunities

Cox has also worked on issues related to career planning and job opportunities for students, creating a multi-county Business Advisory Council to enhance partnerships between local schools, higher education, and employers. In conjunction with local higher education, she developed and implemented a workforce pipeline program prepared to meet the demands of the future and expanded the partnership potential for career-based learning options with local library systems, regional higher education partners, career tech and industry training programs.

She also coordinated a partnership with the local career tech center to provide career tech programming for students with the most severe disabilities.

Managing the Challenges of the Pandemic

When the COVID-19 pandemic closed schools, Cox organized and coordinated school services within the

Greater Miami Valley area and supported state efforts to ensure the health and safety of students and staff. In addition to coordinating the distribution of personal protective equipment to schools, she arranged for storage and distribution of COVID tests and set up a vaccination plan for students and staff that was used as a model in other parts of the state.

To support the shift to virtual education, Cox led an effort to establish the Remote Learning Alliance, a group of educational organizations committed to helping make the transition to remote learning as easy and robust as possible for educators and support personnel during the pandemic and beyond. Montgomery County ESC also serves as the primary ESC contractor for RemotEDx, a state-level initiative that brings together a unique mix of remote, hybrid, and blended-learning partners from across the state to help schools and districts enhance, expand, and more effectively scale personalized learning.

“We have a team that works so well together that we can do all of those things so well even when the world was upside down,” she said.

“It’s not the accomplishments we should be proud of, it’s the journey we take to get there.”

– Shannon Cox

Although she never wants to face the challenges of the pandemic again, Cox said in some ways the experience affirmed that the work she and her team were doing was essential. “We found that we were doing exactly what we were meant to do,” she added.

Craig Burford, Executive Director of the Ohio Educational Service Center Association, recognized that as well when he nominated her for the Justus Prentice Award. He noted that under her leadership, Montgomery County ESC was able to quickly pull together community and private partners to respond to a wide variety of student, family, and school needs during the pandemic.

“Having already laid the groundwork for many of these efforts pre-pandemic as a future-focused leader, Montgomery County ESC was able to quickly pivot and respond to a once-in-a-lifetime event and ensure ongoing high-quality service to drive improved outcomes for students,” Burford said.

In other words, a visionary leader of leaders.