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San Carlos Superintendent Deborah Jackson-Dennison Elected to NAFIS Board of Directors

Washington, DC – March 27, 2023 – The National Association of Federally Impacted Schools (NAFIS) is pleased to announce that Dr. Deborah Jackson-Dennison, Superintendent of San Carlos Unified School District #20 (Arizona), has been elected to the NAFIS Board of Directors. The election took place at the 2023 NAFIS Spring Conference in Washington, DC. Jackson-Dennison previously served on the NAFIS Board for nine years, most recently in 2014.

As a member of the NAFIS Board, Jackson-Dennison will serve as a national leader advocating for school districts that receive Impact Aid. She will also help guide NAFIS public policy work and oversee plans for the association.

Impact Aid reimburses school districts for the loss of revenue caused by the presence of nontaxable Federal property, including military installations; Indian Trust, Treaty and Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act lands; Federal low-income housing facilities; and national laboratories and other Federal buildings and property. It helps ensure students who attend schools on or near Federal property have access to a quality education.

Jackson-Dennison brings 20 years of experience as a superintendent to the board, beginning in 2002 when she became the first Navajo woman to serve as an Arizona public school superintendent. She has led three districts on the Navajo and Apache nations, implementing systemic reforms to address the needs of the Indigenous communities and students served.

In May 2010 Jackson-Dennison was appointed by President Barack Obama to the National Advisory Council on Indian Education (NACIE) and currently serves as its chair. She also served four years on former Arizona Superintendent of Public Instruction Kathy Hoffman's Indian Education Advisory Council. She has served 17 years on the National Indian Impacted Schools Association (NIISA) Board of Directors and is past president of the Arizona State Impact Aid Association (ASIAA).

"As leaders of public school systems that serve Indigenous students and communities, it is essential that we confront the challenges deeply rooted in historical and intergenerational trauma by first ensuring community members – tribal leaders, parents, grandparents, and especially our elders, as the key holders of indigenous wisdom – have a say in what they want their students to know and be able to do when they graduate. The time to focus on instructional and organizational effectiveness that is both culturally responsive and relevant as we restructure and reform schools to better educate Indigenous students is now," said Jackson-Dennison. "The federal Impact Aid program continues to allow us to integrate and correlate such necessary reforms. It is my honor to once again join the NAFIS Board to represent and be a voice for all federally impacted schools and students across America."

“The NAFIS Board plays a critical role in ensuring students in federally impacted school districts have access to the opportunities they need to be the best version of themselves,” said NAFIS Executive Director Nicole Russell. “Debbie brings important insight into the needs of these school districts, their students, and their communities that will help strengthen NAFIS advocacy. Her success as a transformational leader and unique perspective as a past Board member will help guide NAFIS as we move forward.”

Jackson-Dennison’s term will last for two years.

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The National Association of Federally Impacted Schools (NAFIS) represents the 1,100-plus federally impacted public school districts that together educate more than 10 million students across the nation. Federally impacted school districts are those located on or near nontaxable Federal property, including military installations; Indian Trust, Treaty and Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act lands; Federal low income housing facilities; and national parks, national laboratories and other Federal buildings and property. These school districts, which are demographically and geographically diverse, receive Impact Aid, a Federal education program that reimburses school districts for the lost local revenue and additional costs associated with the presence of Federal property. Learn more at www.nafisdc.org.