

## Meet Our Department of Dine' Education, Superintendent of Schools – Harold G. Begay, Ph.D.

Ya'at'eeh Shik'ei, Shidine'i. Shiei Tachiini Naalani Nishli; Tohdich'iini Bashishchii; Lokaa' Dine' Dashicheii; Nakai Dine'i Dashinalii.



Dr. Begay grew up in a traditional Dine' (Navajo) livestock economy on the Navajo reservation in northeast Arizona. From a single-parent family and a community trash dump scavenger at an early age to a Visiting Scholar to UC-Berkeley, and attaining his doctorate credentials in his academic journey, Dr. Begay continues his e-transnational educational work with Stanford University. He continues his work with Stanford University and UCLA to network with Indigenous scholars and students from Japan, Hawai'i, Ecuador, and Bolivia, to bring to surface the instructive power of deeper level literary and philosophical constructs inherent in the epistemology and ontology of Native and Indigenous peoples globally.

He has an earned Ph.D. in Educational Administration from the University of Arizona, Tucson, AZ with a major in school finance and educational leadership and a minor content emphasis in bilingual education and social foundations of education. His professional background is in psychology (B.A.), counseling (M.A.), school finance and education administration (Ph.D.) and cognitive neurology (Visiting Scholar-U.C.-Berkeley).

Dr. Begay has worked in collaboration with university practice-sensitive scholars and researchers in education administration, gifted education, and cognitive neurology for some twenty-five (25) years. He has served as an elected public school board member, has extensive supervisory/management experience in K-12 educational leadership as Federal Projects Director, Business Manager, K-12 principal, acting Human Resource Director, school construction, Assistant, Associate, and full Superintendent over a span of some twenty-eight (28) years. His experience in the different low-resource, low-achieving school systems and working in collaboration with high achieving school districts and Ivy League universities taught him immensely invaluable lessons in advancing equity, inclusion, and diversity in K-12 school systems. Dr. Begay with his Project Team converted four (4) BIE-operated schools to BIE-funded schools along with state charter school status.

With his professional background and continuing interest in psychology, his work over the years has culminated in applying neuroscience exegetics to pressing critical teaching/learning and leadership issues in low-resource, high poverty schools. In these historically disenfranchised school districts, working in a real setting, with real people, in real time, he has demonstrated that with leading-edge technology today, unprecedented achievement is possible focusing on applied research evidence in “best-practices” teaching, learning, and leadership practices. Dr. Begay with his Project Team have shown that if the process, practice, and effects of teaching, learning, and leadership are to have sustained positive impact, then input, process, and outcomes horizontal and vertical equity must be framed from classical philosophical empiricism, the observational and experiential science.

Dr. Begay began work at the University of Arizona for four (4) years as a Teacher Educator and the Assistant Director for a field-based teacher education program. He taught Social Foundations in Education for one year then moved out to the most disenfranchised under-resourced rural school sites with the most persistent school children, pupil, and student academic underachievement state-wide. While employed by the University of Arizona, he also

taught part-time at the local community college branch that he began, then Navajo Community College, now Dine' College, for the local Tuba City community and the regional area. He was appointed as a Visiting Scholar to the Graduate School of Education, University of California-Berkeley, Berkeley, CA.

His documented research and/or scholarship experience published are as follows: a chapter in a book, *Conceptions of Giftedness-Sociocultural Perspectives* (2007), a chapter in, *A Handbook for Teachers of Navajo Children* (2005), an article in the *International Foreign Language Honor Society Journal*, *The Forum of Phi Sigma Iota* (Fall 2003), and in the *Journal of American Indian Education* (1979). He has submitted an article, "Federal Impact Aid Revenues to Arizona School Districts: School Funding for School District Operations or Tax Relief for Property Owners on Indian Lands" to the *Journal of American Indian Education-ASU-Main Campus*, Tempe, AZ. He has a manuscript in final draft titled, "Neuroscience and Historically Underserved Schools: Applying Powerful Data Science to Classroom Practice to Strengthen Student Academic Development." He has another primer manuscript for publication titled, "1906 - 2000 Social and Economic Public Policy Issue: Public Education School Finance Equalization" and currently seeking a contract with a publisher. He has another manuscript for publication titled, "The Epistemology and Ontology of Traditional Dine' Philosophy," and will be executing a contract with Palgrave Macmillan for publication.

Dr. Begay was honored by the Arizona State Department of Education with a "Certificate of Distinction Award," as one of the "Stars of Arizona Education," the Arizona Gifted Education Association as, "Gifted Administrator of the Year," and other national organizations. He turned down speaking engagements from several Arizona Department of Education divisions, school board organizations, universities, Beijing Institute of Education, China, Oxford Roundtable, University of Oxford, Oxfordshire, England, New Zealand Ministry of Education, Outer Mongolia, and Ecuador, South America. Dr. Begay was one of the invited transnational educators in an online seminar on transnational education released by Stanford University [ [FSI | SPICE - SPICE Webinar: "Indigenous Voices: Educational Perspectives from Navajo, Native Hawaiian, and Ainu Scholars in the Diaspora" \(stanford.edu\)](#) ]. He has also presented to a class in Japan via Stanford University online e-hybrid on, "Why it is important to educate on multiculturalism", Stanford e-Kobe, [FSI | SPICE - Opening Ceremony Held for Stanford e-Kobe](#), Stanford, CA.

With continuing developments in cutting-edge technology, Dr. Begay with his Project Team have demonstrated that neurological research can be applied to strengthen teaching, learning, and leadership practices especially in historically underserved schools and classrooms. He has a research paper on this project to be submitted to the *Journal of American Indian Education*, Arizona State University. His field work initiative essentially supports non-pathological neurological studies in the form of *in vivo* (live subjects) research in strengthening cognitive cortical regions associated with reading and mathematics. This area of education research is a relatively new field in neurobiology that has special and significant implications for challenging elementary and secondary educational instructional practices as well as pre-service professional preparation. He has shared his observation that the work he has been doing substantiates scientific evidence that suggest there is a reciprocal modifiability of certain cognitive functioning acquired through experience-dependent neural morphology (changes in neuron structures and functioning).

On demonstrated expertise in the areas of leadership preparation and advancement in a racially, economically, and linguistically diverse schools, districts, and other educational

systems, as K-12 Principal, Assistant Superintendent, Associate Superintendent, and Superintendent, he has evaluated K-12 teachers and support staff and has conducted administrative training/in-services in curriculum and instruction, effective teaching and assessment. In this process, he has advanced K-12 school equity, inclusion, and diversity for some twenty-five (25) years. Dr. Begay has further supervised pre-service teachers and administrators and has served on the ASU doctoral dissertation committee.

In demonstrated understanding of K-12 staffing models and/or organizational models, his employment with a school district began with driving the local school bus, then a high school teacher and served in various community and administrative capacity culminating as Superintendent of Schools. The districts where he has served are the lowest achieving school districts with the lowest school district per pupil-wealth in the state of Arizona. Of recent, within five years, as the Superintendent of Schools, the high school in the district where he worked exceeded all the regional county and regional school districts in mathematics, Algebra I, Algebra II, and Geometry achievement that included the County school district with the highest school district per pupil-wealth.

As the Superintendent of schools focusing on re-organization of schools employing zero-based budgeting, he has worked in collaboration with Stanford University exceptional educational resources for some twenty (20) years and in the process attained unprecedented academic achievement profiles for the school district. Stanford University through his leadership invested around \$800,000 dollars in the school district over this period to leverage the district school's academic achievement profiles to higher, unprecedented levels. Beginning in 2001, with collaborative funding from Stanford University, his staff created on-line pre-collegiate education house for K-12 school children and students that included smaller class-size instruction using personalized e-hybrid blended teaching and mentoring approach. Using Stanford University's "Ten Features of Good Small Schools," Dr. Begay instituted professional development for a core group of teachers and principals on hybrid model of in-person classroom teaching and e-learning via Stanford University's Online High School curriculum and methodology in the school district. In concert with internationally recognized innovative faculty in research and development, specifically the University of Chicago-University Lab Schools and the National Association of Laboratory Schools (NALS), Dr. Begay with his Project Team created robust educational and leadership modules that leveraged teaching, learning, and leadership far beyond conventional textbook-driven teaching and learning.

Dr. Begay's collaborative work entailed teacher/principal in-service using applied research resources from NALS, the Finland Ministry of Education, Stanford University staff developers, the Hawai'i Immersion schools, a high-achieving school district in southern Arizona, Vail Unified School District consultants-staff developers, and another high-achieving school, Stanford University affiliated Hillsdale High School Study Visits ([edpolicy.stanford.edu](http://edpolicy.stanford.edu)), San Mateo Union High School District, San Mateo, CA. Under his leadership in 2011, the school district implemented Beyond Textbooks, "Ten Features" from Stanford University, and had begun the Finnish highly effective education practices. With the University of Arizona, as one of four (4) Principal Investigators, Dr. Begay helped create gifted education for children and students from multiple cultures and countries, specifically, the DISCOVER program and CDTIS, "Cultivating Diverse Talent in STEM", funded by the National Science Foundation.

With Stanford University, Dr. Begay instituted an online hybrid teaching and learning, Online High SchoolX, based on Stanford EPGY, “Education Program for Gifted Youth,” which had been developed into Stanford Pre-Collegiate International Institutes. Due to time constraints, Dr. Begay has turned down opportunities to teach on-line school finance for Arizona State University educational leadership grant-funded programs to certify MA school principalship candidates.

Dr. Begay’s Project Team has conducted extensive in-service training for school district staff, teachers, and administrators in cognitive neurology or brain-based teaching and learning. With demonstrated experience in use of innovative technology, online instruction, and other synchronous and asynchronous distance learning modalities, Dr. Begay field work experience has principally been in K-12 setting in collaboration with higher education specifically Stanford University and the University of Arizona.

As the Associate and Superintendent of schools, Dr. Begay has established solid evidence that historically underserved students can succeed given proper leadership and foundation guided by repurposed school funding. His major grant funded work to these ends leveraging low-performing schools to higher schooling outcomes are as follows:

- Beginning in 1994, he was one of the originators for \$10 million grant award from the National Science Foundation Rural Systemic Initiative for improvement of Math-Science-Technology education for 300 rural schools in the states of Utah, Colorado, Arizona, and New Mexico (UCAN).
- From 2001-2008 and 2010-16, as the lead contact for the school district, the Stanford University Jack Kent Cooke Foundation, Stanford Pre-Collegiate International Institutes and Stanford Program on International and Cross-Cultural Education-Reischauer Scholars Program invested a substantial amount of scholarship funding (\$800,000+) to the K-12 school district school children and students with the singular goal of leveraging the school’s academic profiles to higher levels. The school district academic profiles from the 2017 AZMERIT state test results provide solid evidence that students in under-resourced schools can succeed given proper foundation and support.
- Beginning in 2006-2010, in collaboration with Arizona State University-Center for Indian Education (CIE), the school district that served as the fiscal agent was awarded \$1,199,939 from the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Indian Education, Washington, DC for a Teacher Professional Development program.
- From 2005-07, in collaboration with Arizona State University-CIE, his school district was also awarded \$1,082,000 from the AZ Governor’s Office & U.S. Department of Education, Washington, DC to strengthen teaching practices for the schools. With these grants, the school district graduated and certified thirty-two (32) “home-grown” teachers.
- From October 2013 – 2016, he served as a Co-Principal Investigator for a research grant in conjunction with University of Arizona, COE & BIO5, University of Arizona was awarded \$1,499,415 from the National Science Foundation, Arlington, VA for research on cross-cultural gifted education, “Cultivating Diverse Talent in STEM” with research sites in four AZ high school districts.

From May 2014 to December 2016, Dr. Begay was appointed as a Dissertation Committee member for an ASU doctoral student. With two other ASU professors as

Dissertation Committee members, the student successfully completed her research culminating in an Ed.D. degree in Education Leadership and Innovation in December 2016. Dr. Begay has supervised graduate students' internship from Arizona State University, Northern Arizona University, and the University of Phoenix for their principal and superintendent certification.

His experience with curricular program development and demonstrated leadership in program implementation and delivery as the Assistant and Associate Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction for eleven (11) years, where in concert with nationally recognized innovative faculty in research and development, Dr. Begay with his Project Team created innovative educational practices that leveraged teaching and learning far beyond conventional textbook driven teaching and learning. The collaborative project goals entailed developing new and different pre-collegiate prototype for all persistent talent underclass schools, or those schools given minimal support from the state and federally funded programs for access to enriched, engaging, and stimulating academic opportunities. These enriched educational opportunities are reserved and taken for granted by wealthier schools and students.

Dr. Begay's goal continues to be that those artificial educational barriers in historically underserved schools can be removed so all Student-Strivers, all low-income children, and students, can have equal access to exceptional educational experiences. As the Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Begay with his Project Team opened a new eighteen-million dollar (\$18,000,000) high-tech K-5 elementary school in one school district equipped with the most digitally advanced sophisticated teaching and learning environment for the new century learners. He is currently refining a beacon pre-collegiate digital prototype for all persistent talent underclass schools and students from low-resource schools so that the most disenfranchised students can have access to the best universities at home and abroad. This digital pre-collegiate academic pipeline prototype can be replicated for all Student-Strivers from historically under-resourced schools. Dr. Begay is also a Protection Way and Blessing Way spiritual practitioner helping his clan brothers conduct traditional Dine' ceremonies and is a disabled Vietnam war veteran, USMC.