2026 Board Member of the Year Acceptance Speech by Michael McClure

Good evening, everyone.

To our distinguished guests, fellow board members, school administrators, teachers, support staff, parents, community leaders, and, most importantly, the students we serve — thank you for being here for this special occasion.

It is truly an honor to stand before you as a recipient of the School Board Member of the Year Award in the great state of New Jersey.

I accept this recognition with humility, gratitude, and a deep appreciation for the responsibility that comes with serving our schools and our communities.

First, I want to thank my family and loved ones for their continued support, patience, and encouragement. Public service requires time, commitment, and sacrifice, and their support has made this journey possible.

I also want to recognize my fellow board members, our superintendent, school administrators, teachers, and every employee who works tirelessly to make our schools places where students can learn, grow, and succeed. This honor may have my name attached to it, but the work behind it belongs to an entire team.

Serving on a school board is more than attending meetings, reviewing budgets, or establishing policies. It is about shaping futures.

Every decision we make has the potential to affect a child's education, a teacher's classroom, a family's hopes, and the future of our community.

We must never forget that behind every policy is a student, behind every budget is an opportunity, and behind every school is a community that trusts us to do what is right.

In New Jersey, we are fortunate to have dedicated educators, passionate families, and students with extraordinary potential. Our responsibility is to ensure that every child, regardless of their background or circumstances, has access to a quality education and the opportunity to reach their fullest potential.

That responsibility requires vision. It requires courage. It requires collaboration. And sometimes, it requires making difficult decisions while keeping the best interests of our students at the center of everything we do.

Leadership is not always about being the loudest voice in the room. It is about listening carefully, asking the right questions, standing firm on what matters, and remembering why we chose to serve in the first place.

I believe that strong schools build strong communities. When we invest in our students, support our teachers, strengthen our programs, and work together with families, we are investing in the future of New Jersey itself.

To our teachers and school staff: thank you for the difference you make every day. Your work extends far beyond the classroom, and your influence often lasts long after a student graduates.

To our parents and families: thank you for trusting us with something so precious — your children's futures.

To our students: you are the reason we do this work. Your dreams, your questions, your creativity, and your determination remind us that the future is full of possibility. We must continue to create schools where you feel supported, challenged, respected, and inspired to achieve great things.

And to my fellow school board members: let us continue to lead with integrity, serve with compassion, and work together even when our perspectives differ. Our communities may not always agree on every decision, but they should always be able to trust our commitment to doing what is best for children.

This award is not the finish line. It is a reminder that there is still more work to do.

There are more students to encourage, more opportunities to create, more challenges to overcome, and more ways to make our schools stronger.

I will continue to approach this responsibility with the understanding that public service is not about recognition. It is about impact. It is about leaving our schools better than we found them and making sure that the next generation has greater opportunities than the generation before it.

As I close, I am reminded that the true measure of leadership is not found in the awards we receive, but in the lives we touch, the doors we open, and the futures we help make possible.

Thank you to everyone who has been part of this journey. Thank you for believing in the power of public education, and thank you for your commitment to the children and communities of New Jersey.

It is a privilege to serve, an honor to be recognized, and a responsibility I will continue to carry with pride.

May we always remember that when we stand up for our schools, we stand up for our children — and when we stand up for our children, we stand up for the future.