



2019-20 Annual Report
ELEMENTARY LEVEL BOARD OF CONTROL
Submitted by Dr. Rosie O'Brien Wojtek
CAS Assistant Executive Director

The following school administrators served on the Elementary Level Board of Control during the 2019-2020 school year:

Kristine Bernier, Thomaston Center School, Thomaston
Lisa Eells, Wintonbury Early Childhood Magnet School, Bloomfield
Alicia Farris, Pleasant Valley School, South Windsor
Robert Garry, Hatton Elementary School, Southington
Troy Hopkins, Ashford School, Ashford
Scott Jeffrey, Highland Elementary School, Cheshire
Eric Larson, Haddam-Killingworth Intermediate School, Killingworth
Michael Litke, Naubuc Elementary School, Glastonbury
Joseph Macrino, Oswegatchie School, Waterford
Scott Nozik, West Hills Elementary School, Rocky Hill
Linda Provost, Hebron Avenue School, Glastonbury
Victoria Reed, Highland School, Wallingford
Amy Yost, Sunnyside School, Shelton
Dr. Rosie O'Brien Wojtek, Connecticut Association of Schools

Overview

This was a very challenging year for administrators and school communities across Connecticut because of the COVID-19 pandemic. The year started out strong, but quickly came to an abrupt stop when schools were forced to close. Many CAS workshops, student activities, and award ceremonies were either cancelled, postponed, or conducted virtually.

After administrators got their schools up and running again by organizing schedules, deploying resources, and managing everything else involved with the transition to online remote learning, CAS began offering Zoom-In meetings twice a week and a variety of specific topics for ZOOM conversations and webinars during the spring. In addition, the Elementary Level Board began meeting virtually every other week to check-in and discuss current issues as well as to share ideas and resources with each other. For example, the Elementary Level Board created a shared Google Drive folder as a way to share resources with each other.

As this report is being written, educators are still waiting for guidance from the Governor, CT State Department of Education, and their own Superintendents and Boards of Education about what will happen next year. But, no matter what next year brings, Social Emotional Learning (SEL), school climate, culture and building/maintaining relationships, and equity for all students, especially ELL and Special Education, will be topics of special interest. Likewise, as we move forward into the "new normal" we need to continue to reflect on what we have learned while physically being distanced due to the pandemic. We must: refine those practices that may not have worked as well as they could have if we had more time to plan before implementing them; celebrate our successes; and continue to implement those things that did work well.

Most of all, we have learned that we are all in this together and we need each other. The desire and importance of working collaboratively across Connecticut becomes more relevant and necessary as we continue to learn more about COVID-19. We have known for a long time that Connecticut has one of the largest achievement gaps in the country. However, it has been exacerbated and brought to the forefront during this pandemic as we see these inequities becoming even greater because of the haves and have nots across the digital divide. This is especially true for ELL, Special Education, and students who have parents who, for a number of reasons, were not able to supervise and engage with students during remote learning experiences.

One of the biggest changes in current CAS practices we anticipate seeing in the future is the ability to stay connected to each other virtually through platforms such as ZOOM. Providing members of the board the option to meet at the CAS office in person or virtually will decrease the amount of travel for board members who spend over an hour traveling to and from the CAS office and may, in fact, increase the number of board members who can attend the meetings.

Although the year had its disruptions and challenges, it was a very productive year.

Administrators across the state accepted the challenges created by physical and social distancing. They searched inside and outside the box to find creative ways to create high quality learning opportunities for students, build school spirit and relationships, and actively engage, connect with, and support their school communities.

A special thank you to all of the Elementary Level Board members who provided guidance and support to CAS as well as sharing their leadership and expertise with colleagues across Connecticut.

Elementary Level Board Meetings

The Elementary Board of Control held their first meeting on Tuesday, October 8, 2019. Chairperson Scott Nozik presided over the meeting. The board reviewed: the CLI professional learning calendar and events; the Student Activities calendar and event; and Celebrations, Awards, and Recognitions for the year. The Elementary Board had a lively conversation about how to increase membership and actively engage members in networking, professional learning, and other activities and events. They discussed doing a "Road Show" in different areas of the state to bring Principals together (e.g., presenters like Jo Ann Freiberg on SEL, Round Table Discussion, Book Club Conversations). The board would like to conduct a survey to see what members want and need. They also felt very strongly about bringing back the awards and recognition events (e.g., Outstanding Programs, Volunteer Appreciation).

The Elementary Board of Control held their second meeting on December 12, 2019. Chairperson Scott Nozik presided over the meeting. The board discussed CAS membership and how we can encourage more school leaders and their school communities to join. The board looked at the CAS Survey and made some suggestions for future PD topics. The board is interested in selecting a couple of articles for principals to read and discuss during Tweekchats this winter as part of a book club. Rosie Vojtek talked about the great things she was seeing and learning from her visits to the schools of the Elementary Board of Control members. She tweeted pictures and highlights of her school visits using @CAS_ct. Vicki Reed, Mike Litke, and Scott Nozik recorded a CASconversations Podcast on December 10, 2020 discussing NAESP and CAS memberships and benefits.

The CAS Elementary Board of Control met on Tuesday, January 21, 2020 at 4:30 pm at the CAS Headquarters. The meeting was called to order by Chair Scott Nozik. Mike Litke, NAESP State Representative, and Scott Nozik, CT Federal Relations Representative, provided the members with an NAESP update. Vicki Reed, Zone 1 NAESP Board of Directors, shared "Association of International Schools in Africa (ASIA)" trip to Cape Town, South Africa November 22-24, 2019 with NAESP.

Several other Elementary Level Board meetings were scheduled during the spring, but due to COVID-19 did not happen. Instead, the Elementary Level Board continued to meet on several different occasions informally during every other week "Zoom-in Coffee Break" meetings. Topics varied at these meetings, but included end of the year celebrations and graduations, reopening of the school for next year, summer school, grading, and Special Education/ELL.

National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) Partnership

Vicki Reed, NAESP Zone 1 Director from Connecticut, attended the 2019 NAESP National Distinguished Principal Award Ceremony on October 10-11, 2019. Alicia Sweet Dawe from West Vine Street School in Stonington was honored at the Ceremony as Connecticut's National Distinguished Principal.

Mike Litke, NAESP State Representative from Connecticut and Scott Nozik, Connecticut Federal Relations Coordinator continued to provide reports, updates, and information to members during the year through tweets and newsletters. Mike Litke, NAESP Representative, shared NAESP membership benefits. Membership will continue to be a focus of the Board for the upcoming 2020-21 school year.

Vicki Reed, Mike Litke, Scott Nozik, Karen Packtor, and Rosie Vojtek attended the 2019 NAESP Northeast Regional Leaders' Conference at The Gettysburg Hotel in Gettysburg, PA, October 25-27, 2019.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic the NAESP & NASSP Leadership Conference in Washington DC was cancelled for the 2019-20 year. Likewise, the NAESP summer conference in Louisville Kentucky was cancelled for the same reason.

Elementary Principal Networking Opportunities

Diana Burns, Principal of Chapman School in Cheshire will serve as the Chairperson for the newest CAS committee created to provide principal networking opportunities in several places around the state. Diana hosted a pilot networking meeting in Cheshire on February 24, 2020 with approximately 20 principals who shared successes and challenges with each other. Every one of the principals said this was very valuable and said they want to continue to network with each other next year. The committee meeting scheduled for March 13, 2020 to begin to discuss plans for next year was postponed due to COVID-19. During the social and physical distancing, CAS used ZOOM-In meetings to provide networking opportunities for principals. The work that was started will continue with the work of the newly formed Elementary Networking Committee. Conversations are beginning with middle level principals to see if there is an interest in either joining with elementary principals for networking sessions or creating their own parallel networking sessions.

Early Childhood

Dr. Karen List, Director UCONN PK3 Leadership Program, welcomed approximately 140 participants to the CAS Early Childhood Symposium, "How Adults Can Buffer Stress for Young Children and reduce Challenging Behaviors" at Goodwin College on September 26, 2019. Dr. Amanda P. Williford, Research Associate Professor, Curry School of Education, University of Virginia, presented "Classroom Strategies to Decrease and Respond to Disruptive Behaviors" in the morning. Elizabeth Aschenbrenner, Project Coordinator, Executive Function and Purposeful Play, presented with Emily Caviggia, Killingly Central School Principal, and Natasha Robinson, Primary Instructional Coach at New Britain Public Schools, presented "Executive Function and Active Engagement in Learning – Approaches to Increase Self-Regulation and Outcomes for Children" in the afternoon.

Rosie Vojtek continued the work that was begun by her predecessors (e.g., Regina Birdsell, Jill Hale) with the Office of Early Childhood and the State Department of Education. She works with Dr. Karen List on the PK – 3rd Grade Leadership Program at the UCONN Neag School of Education committee and the CT Birth to Grade 3 committee. The work with each group focused on proposed legislation and the potential impact on schools across the state, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Elementary Little Leaders Conference

John Sieller, Cherese Miller, and Rosie Vojtek attended the Little Leaders Conference at North Branford High School on Tuesday, October 8, 2019. Principals Carter Welch and Joseph Macrino organized the event. North Branford High School Dream Team students welcomed approximately 100 second and third grade students to the conference.

The Elementary Arts Banquet

The 21st Elementary Arts Banquet was held at the Aqua Turf on February 10 and 11, 2020. One hundred fifteen schools attended during the two-night event with over two hundred students being recognized. 2020 Kid Governor, Myra Stanfield, spoke to students both nights during the award ceremony. Special guest artist, Holly O'Brien, a professional actress residing in New York City, who has performed in regional theater and around the world including on the international Seabourne Cruise Line, shared some of her favorite roles, including Belle from *Beauty and the Beast* (which she performed in three different theaters). She also shared some of her hopes and dreams while growing up, and explained the strategies she used to accomplish her goals. During the "Follow Your Dreams" program Holly sang some of her favorite musical theater songs, including songs from *Frozen*, *The Greatest Showman*, and *Beauty and the Beast*. At the end of the performance Holly gave each student a scroll to record their goal(s), actionable strategies to achieve their goals, and to post it somewhere to help them always remember to *Follow Their Dreams!*

Kid Governor

During the summer, Rosie met CT Kid Governor, Ella Briggs, at the Silas Bronson Library in Waterbury during her Library Circuit tour.

Rosie Vojtek serves as a member of the CT Kid Governor Advisory Committee. She met with the committee several times during the year, including Monday, October 28, 2019 to select the 7 candidates who ran for Kid Governor during the statewide election involving fifth grade students, November 4 – November 12, 2019. Rosie attended the 2020 Connecticut Kid's Governor Inauguration on January 17, 2020 at Connecticut's Old State House. She facilitated a session in the House of Representatives chamber while students toured the State House. Secretary of State, Denise Merrill, swore in Myra Stanfield from Eric G. Norfeldt Elementary School West Hartford, as the 2020 Connecticut's Kid Governor during the special ceremony.

Professional Development

The Center for Leadership and Innovation (CLI) hosted a number of professional learning workshops for elementary level administrators and their school communities at CAS until schools and businesses were closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic in mid-March. CAS continued to provide informal weekly Zoom-In meetings on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 11:30 am - 12:30 pm as well as a variety of special Zoom-In meetings and webinars including SEL, Virtual Graduations and Celebrations, and Virtual End of the Year Activities, and Early Childhood. For specific information about the workshops, see the CLI Report.

During the year, there were several specific CLI learning opportunities designed to support PK-6 elementary administrators. These included Restorative Practices with Jo Ann Freiberg, Building Executive Functioning through Purposeful Play, and Successfully Working with Challenging Behaviors.

The Center for Leadership and Innovation (CLI) directors are planning a diverse offering of workshops and conferences for the next school year (2020-21). Watch for the CLI brochure coming this summer!

Student Activities

Until Schools were closed in March, elementary level students participated in the Connecticut Elementary Level Student Leadership Conferences in January. See the CAS Student Activities report for more details.

Connecticut Association of Schools Elementary Level Awards

Rosie Vojtek and Mike Litke presented the CAS 2019-2020 Elementary School of the Year award, on October 17, 2019 to Scott Nozik and the West Hills Elementary School at the Rocky Hill Board of Education meeting.

CONGRATULATIONS to the following elementary level administrators who received special CAS recognition for:

1. **Principal of the Year** - Barbara Silverio, Principal, Pearson School, Winsted
2. **Assistant Principal of the Year** - Garrett Dukette, AP, Ashford School (has since become principal of Baldwin MS in Canterbury)

3. **William Cieslukowski First Year Principal Award** - Patrick Cone, Alfred W. Hanmer Elementary School, Wethersfield.

Once schools are back in session and it is safe to continue the award selection processes the Elementary Level Award Committee will complete the work for the following awards:

4. **Elementary Level Educator of the Year**

5. **Elementary School of the Year**

6. **CAS Exemplary School Climate Practices Recognition Award**

Board Members for 2020-21

We wish to thank outgoing Elementary Level Board member Scott Jeffries from Highland Elementary School in Cheshire for his service to CAS and especially to this Board. We would also like to welcome Diana Burns, principal of Chapman School in Cheshire as a member on the CAS Elementary Level Board beginning 2020-21 year.