



2020-21 Annual Report
ELEMENTARY LEVEL BOARD OF CONTROL
Submitted by Dr. Rosie O'Brien Vojtek
CAS Assistant Executive Director

The following school administrators served on the Elementary Level Board of Control during the 2020-2021 school year:

- Kristine Bernier, Thomaston Center School, Thomaston
- Diana Burns, Chapman Elementary School, Cheshire
- Alicia Farris, Pleasant Valley School, South Windsor
- Robert Garry, Hatton Elementary School, Southington
- Troy Hopkins, Ashford School, Ashford
- Eric Larson, Haddam-Killingworth Intermediate School, Killingworth
- Michael Litke, Naubuc Elementary School, Glastonbury
- Joseph Macrino, Oswegatchie School, Waterford, Vice Chair
- Scott Nozik, West Hills Elementary School, Rocky Hill, Chair
- Linda Provost, Hebron Avenue School, Glastonbury
- Victoria Reed, Highland School, Wallingford (consultant)
- Amy Yost, Sunnyside School, Shelton
- Dr. Rosie O'Brien Vojtek, Connecticut Association of Schools

Overview

The 2020-2021 school year has come to be known as “the year like no other!” Many of our school principals and assistant principals felt more like first year administrators instead of the experienced veterans that most of them are. Throughout the year schools were in a constant state of flux, moving between remote, in-person, or hybrid learning environments, often with very little advanced notice.

CAS began the 20-21 school year where we left off in June 2020 with workshops, student activities, and award ceremonies either cancelled, postponed, or conducted virtually. As we end this school year, most educators have been vaccinated for COVID-19 and we are hopeful that next year will bring back a sense of normalcy, even as it morphs into a “new normal,” yet to be determined.

The weather couldn't have been better on Thursday afternoon, May 27, 2021, when the ROPES Networking group (see below) met in-person for the first time this year at CAS Headquarters for a social event. Everyone was ecstatic as we sat outside without masks and talked - some of us meeting each other in person for the first time!

The Elementary Board continued meeting virtually each month. We had four formal meetings during the year and two informal coffee hours where we just met and talked about whatever was on anyone's mind. The Elementary Board also continued to share resources with each other via our shared Google Drive file folders.

Most of the elementary schools across Connecticut are ending the year in-person with modified versions of their traditional end of the year activities and special events. Many schools are getting ready for summer school programs and/or other extended learning activities. Hot topics for this year continue to be Social Emotional Learning (SEL), positive school climate and culture, staff and student mental well-being and morale, building and

maintaining relationships, social and racial justice, and equity for all students, especially ELL, early childhood, and Special Education. These topics will continue to be important moving forward into the 2021-22 school year.

Like last year, with all the disruptions and challenges, we still had a very productive and successful year. All of us definitely got better at ZOOM, Google Meet, Microsoft TEAMS, and other virtual platforms. Although most of us have experienced “virtual fatigue” at some time during the year, we are all grateful for having the ability to stay connected and to be able to continue to network and share resources with each other. We anticipate that moving forward into next year, we will still continue to do some virtual meetings even as we gain the ability to meet again in-person. We have found that we have better attendance at our virtual elementary board meetings than we did most of the time before the pandemic. Some of our elementary board members travel an hour or more each way to attend our CAS Board Meetings, so it has been great for them to be able to meet without having to drive back and forth, especially on days when they have evening activities. Going forward we plan to provide the option of either meeting in-person or virtually, at least for our formal board meetings, to increase board member attendance and participation.

A special thank you to all of the Elementary Board of Control 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 met six times during the school year either in a formal Board of Control Meeting with full agenda and minutes or in an informal coffee hour meeting to discuss topics of interest. Included below are the lists of formal Elementary Board Meetings and informal Coffee Hour Meetings. All meetings for the year were virtual from 4:00 - 5:30 pm. The meeting dates were as follows:

Formal Elementary Board of Control Meetings

- Monday, October 20, 2020
- Monday, November 9, 2020
- Monday, January 11, 2021
- Monday, May 10, 2021

Informal Elementary Board of Control Coffee Hour Meetings

- Monday, December 14, 2021,
- Monday, February 8, 2021,

Topics of interest for discussion this year included, but were not limited to, Mentoring New Administrators, Social and Racial Justice, Equity, Restorative Practices, building relationships in a virtual environment, books and articles members were reading for their own professional growth or with faculty and staff for professional learning, and of course, increasing CAS and NAESP memberships and participation.

At the final meeting on May 10, 2021, the CAS Elementary Board decided next year (2021-2022) to meet on the 2nd Tuesday of every month from 4-5:30 pm. The formal board meetings will be via Zoom. The informal Coffee Hour Meetings (although we may want to change the name) will be at different venues across the state for a no-host, informal social/networking get together.

The 2021-2022 Elementary Board of Control Meetings will be held from 4:00 - 5:30 pm on the following dates:

Formal Elementary Board of Control Meetings

- Tuesday, October 12, 2021
- Tuesday, December 14, 2021
- Tuesday, February 8, 2022
- Tuesday, May 10, 2022

Informal Elementary Board of Control Coffee Hour Meetings (in-person)

- Tuesday, November 9, 2021
- Tuesday, January 11, 2022
- Tuesday, March 8, 2022
- Tuesday, April 12, 2022 (vacation ?)

National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) Partnership

Vickie Reed's term as NAESP Zone 1 Director from Connecticut came to an end this year. Mike Litke continues as NAESP State Representative from Connecticut and Scott Nozik continues as the Connecticut Federal Relations Coordinator. All three of them continued to provide reports, updates, and information to members during the year at our meetings, through tweets and newsletters.

On April 21, 2021, Vickie Reed, Mike Litke, Scott Nozik, and Rosie Vojtek were part of the Connecticut Association of Schools Advocacy Team attending the NAESP and virtual NAESP & NASSP Leadership Conference and Capitol Hill Day. The CAS team met with each of our Connecticut Delegation staff members. Representative John Larson joined the Zoom Meeting with his staff member for a few minutes during our conversation.

This summer Mike Litke, Vickie Reed, Troy Hopkins, and Rosie Vojtek plan to attend the 100th Year NAESP Conference and Celebration in Chicago July 8 - 10, 2021.

ROPES Elementary and Middle Level Principal Networking

Diana Burns, Principal of Chapman School in Cheshire served as the Chairperson for the newest CAS committee, ROPES, created to provide networking opportunities for Pre-K through grade 8 principals and assistant principals. ROPES stands for Reciprocal Opportunities for Principals to Engage with each other Synergistically. The networking meetings provide opportunities to: problem-solve issues; share and celebrate successes; swap resources and best practices; and discuss current challenges and "hot topics."

The CAS ROPES Committee met virtually several times during the year to plan for the ROPES meetings. Two Ropes meetings were held virtually via ZOOM on Friday, January 22, 2021, and Friday, March 26, 2021. The third meeting this year, a ROPES Networking Social Event was held on Thursday, April 27, 2021, from 4:00 - 6:00 pm outside at the CAS Central Office. Due to COVID-19 the ROPES committee only invited people who had attended one of the other two virtual ROPES networking sessions. Twelve people attended the ROPES social event and had a great time meeting and talking with each other in person. The ROPES committee plans to host more meetings next year both virtually and/or in person. Eventually, the ROPES committee hopes to hold in-person meetings around the state to encourage participation and actively engage more CAS principals and assistant principals in networking opportunities.

Early Childhood

Rosie Vojtek represented CAS as a member of the Connecticut Early Childhood Committee, with members representing OEC, CSDE, CAS, and the RESC Alliance. The committee met every month during the year to plan early childhood professional development opportunities for educators across the state. Due to the pandemic these learning opportunities were all virtual.

Beginning in August, the Principal's Roundtable Conversation webinars were held on the first Thursday of every month. The Teacher's Forum for Early Childhood, PreK through grade three, Special Education, and Related Services webinars were held either the second or third Wednesday or Thursday afternoon of each month. The topics for each group were the same but tailored specifically for administrators during the Roundtable Conversations or for teachers during the Teacher's Forum. Several topics this year included: Family Engagement; Progress Monitoring; Transitions and Retentions; Planning for Next Year; and Celebrations and Lessons Learned During this Pandemic Year.

On May 6, 2021, CAS, CSDE, OEC, NAESP and the National P3 Center produced a webinar featuring: renowned expert in early childhood policy and practice, Dr. Kristie Kauerz; and Associate Executive Director, Professional Learning, at NAESP, Dr. Gracie Branch. They provided an overview of NAESP's recently released (2021) book,

Leading Learning Communities: A Principal's Guide to Early Learning and the Early Grades, and explored the six leadership competencies detailed in the book. Also joining the conversation were five state educational leaders who discussed pre-K to grade 3 leadership within the local context: Andrea Brinnel, Michelle Levy, Karen List, Irene Parisi, and Rosie Vojtek.

Next year, CAS, CSDE, and OEC plan to work together to continue the conversations and key learnings from early childhood research, best practices, and the 6 leadership competencies from *Leading Learning Communities: A Principal's Guide to Early Learning and the Early Grades*.

The Elementary Celebration of the Arts

Due to COVID-19, the 22nd Elementary Arts Banquet was a virtual celebration held on March 30, 2021. One hundred fifty-four students from seventy-eight schools across Connecticut were honored for their achievements in the visual and performing arts. Emceed by CAS Assistant Executive Director, Dr. Rosie Vojtek, the hour-long program included remarks from Dee Hansen, president of the CT Arts Administrators Association; a guest appearance by the newly-elected CT Kid Governor®, Reese Naughton; and a dynamic performance by renowned speed artist Rob Surette. High School student Alexis Lariviere shared a scene from Stand UP Speak OUT's anti-bullying production and offered congratulatory remarks to the award recipients. The highlight of the evening was the video montage featuring all of this year's outstanding artists! Keith McGilvery and Erika Arias from Fox 61 News hosted the event. The entire Celebration of the Arts can be viewed here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aDpWkLG35aE>.

Kid Governor

Rosie Vojtek serves as a member of the CT Kid Governor Advisory Committee. She met virtually with the committee to select the seven candidates for the 2021 Kids Governor election. Fifth grade students across Connecticut voted in the election. On November 20, 2020, Reese Naughton from Oshana Elementary School in Southington was elected the 2021 Connecticut Kid Governor.

The 2021 Connecticut's Kid Governor, Reese Naughton, was elected on her *Be Positive: Pandemic Perseverance* platform focused on physical and mental health during the COVID-19 Pandemic. Her platform focuses on three platform points: (1) Brighten the lives of nursing home residents through positive messages by making Valentine's Day cards, paper decorations, or drawings to send to local nursing facilities; (2) Create a virtual community crate and coordinate a statewide poster contest for positive messages by and for students; and (3) Encourage students to take care of their mental health through safe, outdoor activities with a provided list of activities and a friendly competition between schools.

Professional Development

This year all of the Center for Leadership and Innovation (CLI) professional learning opportunities were virtual due to COVID-19. There were a number of webinars for elementary Pre-K through grade 6 administrators and educators. These are posted on the CAS website. For specific information about the workshops, see the CLI Report.

One of the webinars that the CLI produced this year came from a conversation at an elementary board meeting. The webinar was *Social and Racial Justice and Difficult Conversations* with consultants Audley Donaldson and Paul Vivian. Elementary Board Member, Bob Garry, Hatton Elementary School in Southington was also a webinar presenter. It can be viewed here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EUKCHMV8ErU>.

Student Activities

The Connecticut Elementary Student Leadership Conferences were held virtually via ZOOM this year on February 25, 2021 from 8:45 am – 12:10 pm. For more details, see the CAS Student Activities report.

Connecticut Association of Schools Elementary Awards

Awards were not presented this year due to COVID-19.

Board Members for 2020-21

We wish to thank outgoing Elementary Board members Linda Provost, Hebron Avenue Elementary School in Glastonbury, and Amy Yost, Sunnyside Elementary School in Shelton, for their service to CAS and especially to the Elementary Board. In addition, we would like to thank Vickie Reed who served on the CAS Elementary Board for a number of years, most recently as a consultant. Vickie is retiring, and we wish her all the best as she transitions to the next phase of her life.

We have several administrators joining the CAS Elementary Board of Control beginning this next 2021-2022 school year. We would like to welcome Mary Sue Feige, from Bungay School in Seymour; Diana Dilorio, from Nichols Elementary School in Stratford; and Sarhanna Smith, from Read School in Bridgeport.

Once again we would like to thank all 12 members of the Elementary Board of Control for your service to CAS during the 2020-2021 school year. We appreciate your expertise, time, and dedication to CAS and for making all Connecticut schools great places for students to learn, grow, and achieve.