



THE CONNECTICUT ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS  
67th ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP RECEPTION  
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PRESIDENT'S REPORT

By Donna Hayward, Principal, Haddam-Killingworth High School

As we look forward to the last month or so of school and an earlier-than-I-can-ever-remember graduation date, it's also good to look back over our work for the year here at CAS. We started the year with a changing of the guard, welcoming Glenn Lungarini as our new executive director followed soon after by Cherise Miller who is heading up the student activities division. It has been a pleasure serving with them and the entire CAS staff to support the work of principals and their schools. It has been my honor to serve as your president this year and, as I have reflected on this year and look forward to the work ahead, I have been thinking about what CAS does best.

**CAS Educates:** Each year, the association plays an important role in informing and training both students and educators. We bring students together to teach and facilitate student voice and build leadership skills at the student leadership conference. Educators have benefitted this year from restorative justice training, an equity and women in leadership conversation, a new executive coaching model and a written and ready opioid curriculum.

**CAS Advises:** Often, in the form of legal advice to help us all stay out of trouble. From 504 and ADA guidance, to providing school media safety recommendations, the weekly installment of my favorite feature -- the legal mailbag -- in the CAS newsblast, CAS is my go-to resource for helping avoid the legal potholes that seem to multiply each year. Staying abreast of activity at the state level is now easier with the help of a bill tracking site which helps busy school leaders be aware of what those sometimes pesky legislators have dreamt up lately that impacts our work and our schools.

**CAS Celebrates:** through student leadership awards, the first-ever e-sports championship, Michael's cup for sportsmanship, art scholars and scholar athletes. Unusual and exemplary programs are featured on the Fox 61 student news and Channel 8's "What's Right with Schools". Schools and individual educators are celebrated as well through school of the year designations, exemplary educator of the year, assistant principals and principals of the year awards.

**CAS Advocates:** CAS is essentially principals' lead voice - if not our only voice -- in advocating at the state and national level for what's good for our kids and our schools. Advising, helping to participate in or -- if all else fails -- defending against legislative proposals or policy changes, CAS takes the lead on a variety of issues. This year, one of our big topics was the act concerning classroom safety with CAS holding strong to tone down legislation that would have been crippling to school leaders. Our organization was tested this year with the transgender athlete issue as, while we tend to think alike on many issues, we had divided and deep opinions on this issue and will likely struggle with it for years to come. In the end, what became most important was remembering that CAS represents principals and

the schools and kids they know best AND it's important that – as conversation and discourse has all but dried up in many arenas modeled best by our political leaders on both sides of the aisle, it is critical to our success and wellbeing that we always be smart enough and strong enough to preserve discourse here. We will be tested again, as the issues get harder, the politics get hotter, and..... sometimes, all we can DO is show up. And talk. And figure it out.

**CAS Connects:** My favorite thing about CAS has always been the intangibles, specifically the way that CAS connects us with other school leaders. This is where I come when I just need a minute or two with the only other people on the planet, it seems, who really “get it”. As much as some folks might really try, unless you're one of us who actually lives in the trenches, rising each day around 5am to improve student learning while keeping our schools safe and our kids healthy they don't really get it. We coach, encourage, teach, correct, discipline, invent, create, schedule, budget, write, speak, cheer on the sidelines, and soothe the angry parent – all before trying not to dose off during the musical production that ends at 10pm for which, naturally, we'll start the standing ovation.

These are the things that, in my mind, CAS does best: educate; advise; celebrate; advocate; and connect. Thank you to the CAS staff and membership whose ongoing dedication and energy make all of these things happen.

So when Karen reminded me that I would need to make remarks today, she rejected my original idea of a raucous round of education charades – a clearly overly conservative response to a positively inspired idea – I mean, what could possibly go wrong? So, as I look forward to the 2019-20 end of year in charades, I'll be working up clues to describe a favorite board member, an intense parent, several superintendents.... the possibilities are endless.