

THE CONNECTICUT ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS
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PRESIDENT'S REPORT

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Jean Humbert, the preeminent Swiss educator and philosopher, often professed his love of the University of Fribourg Community. He treasured the vibrancy of the teaching and learning that occurred there. He cherished his interactions with students and the many longstanding relationships he enjoyed with them well after their graduation. Not surprisingly, he identified as one of his primary sources of inspiration to be interactions with his fellow professors and academicians at the university, many of whom were well known and all of whom were bonded by the allure of research and discovery. When asked, specifically, why he embraced such a large number of his colleagues so unconditionally and so warmly, he responded that he respected their professionalism, competence, and dependability. He admired their integrity, cooperation, and perseverance. Most of all, he was inspired by their commitment to make a difference in the lives of others. He said that he viewed his colleagues not only as educators but also as missionaries. Their calling, he believed, transcended factors of opportunity, of prestige, and of income. In his judgment, they were motivated by, even compelled by the desire to do good and to effect positive change.

During my tenure as president of the Connecticut Association of Schools, I have had the opportunity to work with school administrators and CAS officials who embody the exceptional characteristics that Humbert described very long ago of his colleagues. Some of the school administrators are well known others less so, but virtually all of them impressed me by their ability, temperament, dedication, and compassion. As important, they maintain their steadfast commitment to the personal, social and educational development of children; many do so in circumstances that are relentlessly demanding of their time, their energy, and their good will. But they persist. I believe that they demonstrate a vision and a work ethic that exceed the traits of professional excellence. They are missionaries, who by conviction, strength of character, and sheer stamina persist to do good and to effect positive change in the best interests of children. They are an inspiration to me. I was proud to represent school administrators and CAS officials during the last two years. I consider the privilege of serving them as president as one of the proudest and most fulfilling experiences I have enjoyed during my 35 years as educator. For many reasons, in presenting my President's Report today, I thank them, first and foremost, for their time, their work, and their contributions. They have advanced the mission of CAS, and they have made a difference in the lives of children. Like so many others, I am indebted to them. To school administrators throughout Connecticut and to the CAS officials, I express my deepest appreciation for all they have done, and extend my best wishes to them for continued success and personal fulfillment.

During the course of this Annual Meeting, you will hear several reports about the excellent work of CAS. I would like to list for you today some of the major initiatives and accomplishments that occurred this year. I do so in order to provide context for the presentations that follow my report.

REPRESENTATIVE INITIATIVES: 2003-2004 SCHOOL YEAR

- Implementation of the Three-Year Plan;
- Increase in the number and quality of topic-specific professional development forums, workshops, and symposia;
- Increase in electronic communications with CAS members pertaining to preferred practices, professional development, and administrator-initiated inquiries;
- Participation of over 100 high schools in the CAS-sponsored *Respect Me* Program;
- Greater number of non-athletic student leadership programs planned and hosted by the Student Activities Board of Control;
- Improvements implemented by the Student Activities Board of Control to provide additional structure and support in the governance of cheerleading activities and competitions;
- The Principals' Center's development of position papers addressing critical issues in K-12 education: *No Child Left Behind* legislation, the role and function of the principal, administrator induction programs, and the achievement gap;
- The expansion of the Principals' Center's administrator mentorship program; over 200 mentors and mentees participated in the program during the current school year;
- Increase in collaboration between the Principals' Center and the Connecticut Association of Urban Superintendents, the State Department of Education, and Southern Connecticut State University in the areas of preferred practices, administrative leadership, and mentoring of new administrators;
- Continuation and enhancement of the annual school administrators' retreat;

- Improvement of the CAS web site, including weekly updates and distribution of the calendar of events and the distribution of periodic, timely communication of significant news potentially affecting CAS members;
- Development of assessment and technical assistance services by the CIAC Board of Control that will enhance the quality of high school athletics; these services include, but are not limited to, initiatives pertaining to character development, sportsmanship, and ethical behavior;
- Increase in the number of conferences pertaining to elementary school education and/or involving elementary school students, including the new Marine Science Day, which will become an annual event;
- The development of an outreach program for elementary school administrators and teachers that established five geographically-dispersed sites designed to facilitate better access to professional development pertaining to elementary school education;
- Greater focus on exemplary practices in education among middle school members;
- Transition to electronic communication as a sole medium for distributing information to middle school administrators about committees, boards, and related organizational information.

FUTURE CHALLENGES

The impressive work and success of CAS notwithstanding, there is much work to be done to ensure its continued preeminence in educational leadership and school reform:

- It is imperative that CAS maintain its productive partnership with the State Department of Education; it is important that the Association sustains its dialog and cooperation with Commissioner Sternberg.
- Given the varied, complicated, and often unanticipated interests and concerns pertaining to education among state legislators, it is extremely important that the voice of CAS be heard both by members of the Education Committee of the General Assembly and by the entire General Assembly.
- CAS should continue its efforts to effect changes in or to eliminate the state legislation pertaining to the start times for standardized testing in public schools.
- Some opportunities to advance CAS's purview, profile, and influence should not be embraced because of their potential to compromise the quality of the Association's current initiatives as well as the Association's traditional services and/or programs. As I have mentioned often during my two years as president of CAS, the Association cannot be all things to all people. One of the primary tenets of our standard of performance must be "doing fewer things well rather than many things poorly." Guided by that tenet, one of our most important priorities should be sustained focus on the goals and objectives of the Three-Year Plan.
- In consideration of the current economic climate and revenue-related issues, we must accept the reality that, with few if any exceptions, our conferences, workshops, recognition programs, and related activities must be self-funded.
- It must be the priority of the Association to nurture interest in and commitment to the mission of CAS among the next generation of school leaders while recognizing the many contributions of veteran administrators. It is particularly important for CAS to continue its efforts to encourage more school leaders employed in urban districts to become involved in the Association.
- The accreditation standards of the New England Association of Schools and Colleges are challenging and complex. They are also critical to school improvement in Connecticut. CAS should continue its leadership in assisting school districts in understanding the standards, identifying related preferred practices, and implementing required changes in schools.
- The *No Child Left Behind Act* represents both opportunity and danger to school reform and to school leadership. CAS should remain vigilant in keeping its membership informed about NCLB regulations that are in effect and their actual or potential influence on teaching and learning. CAS needs to work closely with NAESP, NMSA, and NASSP leadership in demanding both flexibility in and funding for meeting its mandates.
- The Association must continue to explore methods and means by which retired school administrators could contribute to the realization of its goals and objectives.
- The CAS central-office personnel should continue to use technology in expediting services and communications. They should continue to use technology in reducing the operating costs of the Association.

There is, indeed, much work to be done; however, I am comforted by the goodwill and the hard work of the many educators and staff members who advance the mission of the Association. I thank all of you, once again, for your contributions to CAS. I am privileged to be your colleague; I will remember you fondly.