



**2021-22 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 2021-2022 school year:

- Kristine Bernier, Thomaston Center School, Thomaston
- Diana Burns, Chapman Elementary School, Cheshire
- Joanne Conte, Benjamin Franklin Elementary School, Meriden
- Diana Dilorio, Nichols School, Stratford
- Alicia Farris, Pleasant Valley School, South Windsor
- Mary Sue Feige, Bungay School, Seymour
- Robert Garry, Hatton Elementary School, Southington – Vice Chair
- Troy Hopkins, Ashford School, Ashford (consultant)
- Eric Larson, Haddam-Killingworth Intermediate School, Killingworth
- Michael Litke, Naubuc Elementary School, Glastonbury – NAESP State Representative
- Joseph Macrino, Oswegatchie School, Waterford - Chair
- Scott Nozik, West Hills Elementary School, Rocky Hill – NAESP Federal Relations Coordinator
- Sarhanna Smith, Read School, Bridgeport
- Amy Yost, Sunnyside School, Shelton (Consultant)
- Dr. Rosie O'Brien Vojtek, Connecticut Association of Schools

**Overview**

We began the 2021-2022 school year hopeful that we would soon return to the “new normal,” whatever that meant. Most schools opened their doors with students wearing masks and maintaining a safe distance from each other. Administrators spent the first couple of board meetings discussing the protocols with each other that were in place at their schools. Throughout the year, administrators continued to struggle with the next COVID strain and/or surge that moved through their schools, districts and across the state. Schools and districts did what they could to stay open, with principals often doing their own job as well as filling in for faculty and staff who were out due to COVID. So, “just when you thought it couldn’t get any worse... it did!” Toward the end of the school year, for the most part, people just decided to live their lives and treat COVID like the flu. Even though COVID numbers continued to increase, especially after holidays, schools were able to hold many of the end of the year traditions (e.g., student activities and events) that had been canceled during the previous two school years.

The Elementary Board set three areas of focus for the year:

- Early Childhood
- Diversity, Equity and Inclusion
- Mental Health, Wellness, Self-care, and Trauma

All of these are important to the Elementary Board. However, the primary Board goal for the year was studying the issues of the kindergarten start date as well as universal pre-K. These discussions became a focal point of all

of our meetings, including informal meetings, throughout the year. After meeting with Dr. Lungarini and Karen Packtor in December, the Elementary Board decided to put together a position paper and work with Dr. Lungarini to write a legislative proposal for an earlier kindergarten entrance date and universal PreK to present to State Representatives during the 2022-2023 Legislative Session.

In addition, the Elementary Board still grappled with the previous years “hot topics,” such as Social Emotional Learning (SEL), positive school climate and culture, staff and student mental well-being and morale, administrator and staff self-care, building and maintaining relationships and community, social and racial justice, equity for all students, especially ELs, early childhood, and Special Education. These topics will continue to be important moving forward into the 2022-23 school year.

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**

Joe Macrino became the chair for the Elementary Board and began the October 12, 2021 meeting by welcoming new board members Joanne Conte, Diana Dilorio, and Mary Sue Feige. At each meeting during the year, NAESP State Representative Mike Litke and NAESP Federal Relations Representative Scott Nozik provided the Board with updates and/or reports.

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, especially early childhood. Included below are the lists of formal Elementary Board Meetings and informal Coffee Hour Meetings. All the meetings this year except one were virtual. The Board met from 4:00 - 5:30 pm. The meeting dates were as follows:

#### **Formal Board Meetings (virtual):**

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

#### **Informal Coffee/Happy Hour Meetings**

- Tuesday, November 9, 2021 (in person at Viron Rondo)
- Tuesday, March 8, 2022 (virtual)

As mentioned earlier, the primary agenda item and focus for the Elementary Board this year was Early Childhood. Highlights from the Board meetings include:

- An informal Elementary Board Meeting that was held in person on November 9, 2021 at Viron Rondo in Cheshire. It was the first time since COVID began that we were able to meet in person, and the only time it occurred as a Board during the 2021-2022 school year.
- Dr. Glenn Lungarini and Karen Packtor attended the virtual December 13, 2021 meeting to discuss our next steps moving forward with advocacy and possibly submitting a legislative proposal on a change to the kindergarten entrance date and universal pre-K. Following a lengthy discussion, members decided to spend our time this year researching these topics, writing a position paper, advocating for our position with the intention of bringing forward a proposal for the 2022-2023 CT Legislative Session.
- In January, Chair Joe Macrino and Rosie Vojtek met via ZOOM with Danny Carlson, NAESP Associate Executive Director of Policy and Advocacy, to discuss research and next steps for our work on universal pre-K and the kindergarten entrance date. Danny introduced us via email to

Education Advisor Elliot Regenstein and Matt Weyer from the Education Commission of the States who shared a number of resources with us. These resources are archived in our Elementary Board shared Google Folder.

- During the March 8, 2022 informal meeting, Board members shared the early childhood websites and articles as a jig-saw activity. Special guest, CREC Specialist Mary Jo Terranova, shared research she has done on the topics of universal pre-K and kindergarten entrance date.

The Elementary Board did not set its meetings for the 2022-2023 school year. These will need to be set in the summer. The Elementary Board plans to write a position paper and advocate for its position with key stakeholders across the state. In addition, members plan to write a legislative proposal for an earlier kindergarten entrance date and universal pre-K to present to State Representatives during the 2022-2023 Legislative Session.

### **National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP)**

The 100th NAESP Anniversary Celebration and National Conference were held in Chicago July 9-10, 2021. Attending the conference from Connecticut were Mike Litke, Vickie Reed, Troy Hopkins, Garrett Dukette and Rosie Vojtek. While at the conference, Garrett was one of the 2020 NAESP National Outstanding Assistant Principals of the Year who was honored during one of the main sessions. Congratulations, Garrett! Learn more [here](#).

During the year, NAESP CT State Representative, Mike Litke, and NAESP CT Federal Relations Representative, Scott Nozik, provided written reports to the CAS Middle Level Board of Control. NAESP is planning an in-person conference in Louisville, Kentucky, July 15-17, 2022.

### **NAESP and NASSP National Leadership Conference and Virtual Capitol Hill Day**

This year, the NAESP and NASSP National Leadership Conference took place in person in Washington, DC. However, most of the meetings with the Senators, Representatives and/or their staff were held virtually. An advocacy team of principals from Connecticut attended the National Leadership Conference in person for the NAESP and NASSP meetings. The contingent representing CAS included: Mike Litke, Scott Nozik, Kathleen Gombos, and Andre Hauser. CAS staff also attended the meetings virtually with the members of our Connecticut delegation.

### **ROPES Elementary and Middle Level Principal Networking**

Diana Burns, Principal of Chapman School in Cheshire serves as the chairperson of the CAS ROPES Committee. ROPES provides networking opportunities for pre-K through grade 8 principals and assistant principals. ROPES stands for **R**eciprocal **O**pportunities for **P**rin cipals to **E**ngage with each other **S**ynergistically. 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. The ROPES Committee planned two different events for in-person networking meetings at Vespucci’s Restaurant in Cheshire. Both events were canceled due to low registration. However, the February 17, 2022 St. Patrick’s Day virtual networking event did occur and participants were excited to see and talk with each other. The ROPES Committee is hopeful that people will be able to join meetings in person next year. They also plan to set the dates early in the year for meetings, making sure the dates and times conflict as little as possible with other meetings and events.

### **Early Childhood Professional Development**

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, on the first Thursday of each month, members of the CT Early Childhood Committee hosted a Virtual Administrator Response Support Session from 9-10 am via ZOOM. Each of these sessions was recorded and posted on the CAS website along with any presenter resources used during the session. The CT Early Childhood Committee plans to continue these virtual webinars each month again next year.

On May 24, 2022, CAS, in collaboration with the State Department of Education and the Office of Early Childhood, hosted a virtual forum, *Here They Come: A Convening to Assist in the Transition from Kindergarten to First Grade*. The impact of the pandemic on children's social-emotional development, self-regulation, learning experiences, and skills across all domains is like nothing we have seen! During the program early childhood experts, teachers, and administrators shared real-life examples and evidence-based best practices that support young children's emotional well-being and skill development. Early Childhood Consultant EA Aschenbrenner presented on the importance of purposeful play, developmentally appropriate practices, brain-based research, and executive functioning skills. A panel of experts discussed the when, why, and how to create high quality early childhood programs and planning for a successful transition from Kindergarten to first grade. A highlight of the convening was a virtual field trip to Oswegatchie Elementary School in Waterford, CT, hosted by Principal Joe Macrino.

The program provided ideas, tools, and strategies to assist in planning for the transition of young children for the 2022-23 school year. Click [here](#) to watch the webinar recording.

### **The Virtual 2022 Elementary Celebration of the Arts**

Even though the date and plans were set for an in-person celebration, when Connecticut experienced a huge spike in COVID-19 in January, it was decided that it wouldn't be prudent to bring all of the students and families together at the Aqua Turf on February 8, 2022. The CAS Elementary Board voted unanimously to make the 23rd Elementary Arts Banquet a virtual celebration. The celebration was recorded and held on Tuesday, March 15, 2022. You can view it [here](#).

One hundred sixty-five students from 82 schools across Connecticut were honored for their achievements in the visual and performing arts. Keith McGilvery and Symphoni Privett from Fox61 News served as the event hosts. The Celebration was emceed by CAS Assistant Executive Director, Dr. Rosie O'Brien Vojtek. The hour-long program included remarks from Dr. Melissa Hickey, Director of Literacy/Reading at the Connecticut State Department of Education, Dr. Glenn Lungarini, CAS-CIAC Executive Director, and 2022 Kid Governor Makhi Ettienne-Modeste. There was a short video presentation from *The CAS Virtual Night of the Stars* along with entertainment from The Connecticut Storytelling Center. Director Ann Shapiro introduced Storytelling performers Tom Callinan and Carol Glynn who shared stories and songs with the audience. Once again there was a special video montage celebrating all of the outstanding student artists.

### **Kid Governor**

Rosie Vojtek serves as a member of the CT Kid Governor Advisory Committee. On Wednesday, November 3, 2022, Rosie joined the Kid Governor Bus Tour as it traveled to several schools introducing 2021 CT Kid Governor Reese Naughton and rallying interest and support for the program and the coming election.

In addition, Rosie Vojtek worked with the CT Kid Governor Advisory committee and staff to select the seven candidates for the 2022 CT Kid Governor election. The election was held during the month of November with 5th grade students across the state voting for their favorite candidate.

On Friday, January 21, 2022, Connecticut's Kid Governor Makhi Ettienne-Modeste and his Cabinet were officially sworn into office at Inauguration Day 2022! Connecticut 5th graders, teachers, and community members watched live online to observe the transition of power between 2021 Kid Governor Reese Naughton and 2022 Kid Governor Makhi. Learn more about the CT Kid Governor Program [here](#).

### **Professional Development**

Again this year all of the Center for Leadership and Innovation (CLI) professional learning opportunities were virtual. This in part was because of COVID-19. However, we have also found that, by doing the webinars virtually, we have a higher attendance than in person because it is difficult for administrators to leave their buildings. Likewise, by recording the webinars and posting them on our website, administrators can watch them when they have time and use them with their faculty, staff, students and even PTA/PTO's for professional learning.

A large focus for CAS this past year has been Diversity, Equity and Inclusion. In the spring of 2021 a CAS Equity Committee was formed and met regularly during the year to design and produce three educational equity summits. Elementary members of the committee included Joanne Conte, Troy Hopkins, Joe Macrino, and Sarhanna Smith. Links to the recordings of all three summits are below:

Equity Education Summit Series - Part I: [Learning and Leading for Systemic Racial and Social Justice](#)

Equity Education Summit Series - Part II: [Inclusive Excellence](#)

Equity Education Summit Series - Part III: [DEI from Different Perspectives](#)

For more information about all of the webinars and summits, see the [CLI report](#) and the [CAS website](#).

The Education Equity Summits included:

Conversations about wellness issues, including but not limited to mental health, self-care, mindfulness, staff morale, trauma and positive school climate/culture, were also very important topics of discussion among elementary administrators during the year. CAS formed a new Wellness Committee that met regularly during the year to plan CAS webinars. Amy Yost, Garrett Dukette and Sarhanna Smith represented elementary principals on this committee. There were a number of excellent webinars on these topics during the year. It was through this committee that we met UCONN Professor Dr. Lisa Sanetti, who now also serves on this committee. She did a webinar for us and has agreed to write a monthly column called "Well-being this Week: For Educators. By Educators" for the CAS Newsblast.

There were a number of other webinars for pre-K through grade 6 administrators and educators. These are posted on the CAS website. The listing is also on the CAS YouTube Channel and can be found [here](#). The list continues to be updated as more webinars are recorded.

### **Student Activities**

The Connecticut Elementary Student Leadership Conferences were held virtually via ZOOM this year on January 11, 2022 from 8:45 am – 12:10 pm. For more details, see the [CAS Student Activities Report](#).

### **Connecticut Association of Schools 2021-2022 Award**

During the Connecticut Association of Schools was excited to once again present the following awards and recognitions:

- **CAS 2022 William Cieslukowski First Year Principal Award:** Christine Mori, Highcrest School, Wethersfield CT
- CAS 2022 Elementary School of the Year: Ellen P. Hubbell Elementary School, Bristol CT. Kristine DeLeo, Principal.
- Exemplary School Climate Practices Recognition:
  - Ellen P. Hubbell Elementary School, Bristol CT - Kristine DeLeo, Principal.
  - George Hersey Robertson Intermediate School, Coventry CT - Jennifer DeRagon, Principal

### **Board Members for 2022-23**

The 2022-2023 Elementary Board of Control members will remain the same as this past year. Troy Hopkins served this year as a consultant to the Elementary Board. He has accepted a position as the Superintendent of North Stonington Public Schools and will no longer be serving as a consultant on the Elementary Board. Congratulations Troy!

Retiring from CAS this year is Rosie Vojtek, Assistant Executive Director and liaison to the Elementary Board. Rosie added the following note to the May 10, 2022 Elementary Board agenda:

*Today is bittersweet. My husband, Bob, retires from Avon at the end of the year, and we want to travel and enjoy doing all the things we never had time to do while we were working. However, I won't be going far, as I LOVE CAS! You have my personal cell phone number below, so feel free to call me anytime! After all these years, it feels really strange to even try to picture a life without CAS! I cherish our time together and our friendships and hope we can stay in touch! Best wishes to ALL of you as you continue to MAKE A DIFFERENCE in your school communities!*

Once again we would like to thank all 12 members and 2 consultants on the Elementary Board of Control for your service to CAS during the 2021-2022 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. Have a well-deserved FUN and Relaxing Summer!