



2021-22 Annual Report
MIDDLE LEVEL BOARD OF CONTROL
Submitted by Dr. Rosie O'Brien Vojtek
CAS Assistant Executive Director

The following school administrators served on the Middle Level Board of Control during the 2021-2022 school year:

- Christine Baldelli, New Fairfield Middle School, New Fairfield - CHAIR
- Michael Bernardi, Rochambeau Middle School, Southbury
- Scott Gaudet, Greene-Hills School, Bristol
- Nilda Irizary, Irving Robbins Middle School, Farmington
- Liana Jorgensen, Sage Park Middle School, Windsor
- Jason Lambert, Martin Kellogg Middle School, Newington
- Deane Renda, Whisconier Middle School, Brookfield
- Tim Salem, Scotts Ridge Middle School, Ridgefield
- Kenneth Seltzer, Fairfield Woods Middle School, Fairfield
- Todd Snyder, Dag Hammarskjold School, Wallingford
- Matthew Walton, Old Saybrook Middle School, Old Saybrook
- 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 with each other the protocols 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 Middle Level Board of Control continued meeting virtually this year. We had four formal meetings during the year and one informal coffee hour where we just met and talked about whatever was on anyone’s mind. The Middle Level Board also continued to share resources with each other during meetings and via our shared Google Drive file folders.

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

Middle Level Board Meetings

The Middle Level Board members remained the same as the previous 2020-2021 school year. This allowed the Board to pick up and continue where they left off last year.

Included below are the lists of formal Middle Level Board Meetings and the informal Coffee Hour Meeting held this year. All meetings were virtual from 4:30 pm - 6:00 pm. The meeting dates were as follows.

Formal Middle Level Board of Control Meetings -

- Monday, October 25, 2021
- Monday, February 28, 2022
- Monday, March 28, 2022
- Monday, May 2, 2022

Informal Middle Level Board of Control Coffee Hour Meetings -

- Monday, November 22, 2022

The Board spent time at each of their meetings discussing their “survival” issues, primarily Covid protocols and logistical concerns, SEL and trauma for students and staff, and wellness, self-care and staff morale issues. There were other topics of interest for discussion this year, but these tended to take a “backseat” to the survival issues and concerns. Other topics of interest include: Social and Racial Justice; Equity; building relationships and community now that everyone is back in school; books and articles members were reading for their own professional growth or with faculty and staff for professional learning; and, of course, increasing CAS membership and participation.

The Middle Level Board of Control did not set the meetings for the 2022-23 school year yet. The meeting dates and times will be decided during the summer for next year.

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 Advocacy Team of Principals representing CAS included: Mike Litke, Scott Nozik, Katherleen Gombos, and Andre Hauser. The Advocacy Team met with members of the CT delegation either in person or virtually via Zoom. CAS staff also attended the meetings virtually with our Connecticut Delegation.

NAESP, NASSP, NELMS and AMLE

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.

AMLE’s Annual Conference was held in-person in Louisville, Kentucky, November 4-6, 2021. The AMLE22 Conference is November 3-5 in Orlando, Florida. NASSP will not hold their National Principals Conference this summer. The NELMS virtual conference was March 18-19, 2022.

ROPES Elementary and Middle Level Principal Networking

Diana Burns, Principal of Chapman School in Cheshire serves as the Chairperson for CAS ROPES committee. ROPES provides 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. The ROPES Committee planned two different events for in person networking meetings at Vespucci’s Restaurant in Cheshire. Both events were canceled due to a small 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.

Professional Development

Due to COVID-19, the Center for Leadership and Innovation (CLI) did all of their webinars and meetings virtually this year. The CLI hosted a variety of professional learning webinars that were appropriate for middle level administrators and their school communities. Of particular interest to middle school administrators were the legal webinars and those that dealt with administrator and staff wellness, morale, and self-care. There was also a lot of interest in SEL and trauma webinars.

The CLI also hosted three Virtual Education Equity Summits. Middle Level Board Member, Nilda Irizaray, who was also the 2020 Outstanding Middle Level First Year Principal, presented at the third equity summit. For more information about all of the webinars and summits, see the CLI report and the CAS website.

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. Middle level members of the committee included Ken Seltzer and Kristy Zaleta. Middle level board member Nilda Irizaray, who was also the 2020 Outstanding Middle Level First-Year Principal, presented at the third Equity Summit. 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](#).

Student Activities

This year Connecticut middle level students participated in a Virtual CAS Middle Level Student Leadership Conference on January 13, 2022.

The Scholar-Leader Banquet took place at the Aqua Turf on June 6, 2022. It was great to be back celebrating the scholar-leaders in person after two years of not being able to do so. There were approximately 960 people in attendance representing 105 schools who were celebrating over 210 scholar-leaders. Liana Jorgensen welcomed everyone on behalf of CAS and the Middle Level Board. Deane Renda introduced keynote speaker, Bo Ryan, principal of Ana Grace Academy of the Arts School in Bloomfield. Bo did an amazing job speaking to students as the keynote speaker.

Connecticut Association of Schools 2021-2022 Middle Level Awards

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

- CAS 2022 William Cieslukowski First Year Principal Award: Christina Amaral, East Hampton Middle School, East Hampton Connecticut
- CAS 2022 Exemplary School of the Year: Greene-Hills School, Bristol Connecticut - Scott Gaudet, Principal
- CAS 2022 Exemplary Educator: John G. Geary, Social Studies Teacher for 45 years, Beman Middle School in Middletown, Connecticut
- Exemplary School Climate Practices: Greene-Hills School, Bristol Connecticut. Scott Gaudet, Principal

Other Recognitions:

Middle level board member Tim Salem of Scotts Ridge Middle School in Ridgefield, Connecticut, received the [2022 Distinguished School Administrator Award](#) from the American Association of School Librarians. Congratulations, Tim!

Board Members for 2022-23

We want to thank the following outgoing Middle Level Board Members for their service on this CAS board. A special THANK YOU to:

- Christine Baldelli, New Fairfield Middle School and Chair of this Committee.
CONGRATULATIONS to Christine who is retiring at the end of the school year.
- Matt Walton, Old Saybrook Middle School. Matt will continue to serve CAS in other capacities, including as a member of the CAS Board of Directors.
- Scott Gaudet, Greene-Hills School, Bristol
- Jason Lambert, Martin Kellogg Middle School, Newington

Retiring from CAS this year is Rosie Vojtek, Assistant Executive Director and liaison to the Middle Level Board. Rosie added the following note to the May 2, 2022 Middle Level 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!

Again, a special thank you to the members of the Board who are leaving us at the end of the school year. We greatly appreciate your time and dedication to CAS and wish you all the best!

We also want to welcome several new members joining the CAS Middle Level Board next year. These members include:

- Bo Ryan, Ana Grace Academy of the Arts School, Bloomfield
- Kristy Zaleta, Rogers Park Middle School, Danbury
- Garrett Dukette, Helen Baldwin Middle School, Canterbury
- Rachel Caggiano, Derby Middle School

In conclusion, we want to thank all eleven members of the CAS Middle Level Board of Control for your service to CAS during the 2021-2022 school year. We appreciate your expertise, time, and dedication to CAS and thank you for making all Connecticut schools great places for students to learn, grow, and achieve. Have a well-deserved FUN and relaxing Summer!