



2025-2026 Annual Report
ELEMENTARY LEVEL BOARD OF CONTROL
Submitted by Dr. Alicia Bowman, CAS Associate Executive Director
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Elementary Level Board Meetings

The Elementary Level Board of Control, chaired by Diana Burns, principal of Chapman Elementary School in Cheshire, met virtually three times this year to discuss topics of interest and concern. Key areas included implementation of Challenging Behavior legislation and play-based learning. Social-emotional learning needs and the impact of restorative practices remained focal points throughout the year.

NAESP State Representative Jen DeRagon and NAESP Federal Relations Coordinator Shay Lewis provided updates at each meeting.

Professional Learning Opportunities

CAS continued to refine and expand professional learning to meet the evolving needs of elementary leaders, with a focus on instructional practices, whole-child development, and inclusive school environments. Offerings included sessions such as *Restorative Practices*, addressing priorities related to equity, student support, and school climate.

Elementary-specific offerings for 2025–2026 included:

- Summer Unconference Sessions (Elementary)
- Six Bricks Training
- Play with Purpose: Aligning Play-Based Learning with the Vision of the Graduate (VoG)

The Summer Unconference Sessions remained a highly attended, participant-driven learning opportunity aligned to current needs in the field. Six Bricks and Play with Purpose build on play-based learning fundamentals and support the enhanced levels of work across the state.

The Board of Control continued to inform professional learning priorities through member feedback and emerging trends. Additional details are available in the Center for Leadership and Innovation [Annual Report](#).

Elementary Celebration of the Arts

Over 115 elementary schools participated in the February Elementary Celebration of the Arts, honoring more than 230 students for achievements in the visual and performing arts. The event was emceed by Diana Burns, Elementary Board of Control Chair, and included remarks from 2026 Kid Governor Tessa Hallinan, along with a performance by Cool Cats, secured through Arts for Learning, CT.

NAESP and NASSP National Leadership Conference and Capitol Hill Day

The joint NAESP-NASSP National School Leaders Advocacy Conference was held in Washington, DC, in March 2026. A Connecticut delegation of two school leaders and one CAS staff member met with Congressional leaders and staff to advocate for federal K–12 education policies that best support students, educators, families, and local communities.

Student Activities

The Elementary Student Leadership Conferences were held in January 2026, welcoming over 1,000 students to four college campuses statewide. Additional details are included in the CT Student Activities Conference [Annual Report](#).

2025–2026 Elementary Level Awards

The Connecticut Association of Schools recognized the following elementary leaders:

- **2026 Elementary School of the Year:** G.H. Robertson Intermediate School, Coventry, Jennifer DeRagon, Principal
- **2026 Elementary Assistant Principal of the Year:** Lea DiStefano, Eli Whitney Elementary School, Stratford
- **2026 Elementary Principal of the Year:** Diurca Lugo-Tomasella, Roberto Clemente International Dual Language School, Waterbury