



2024-25 ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP RECEPTION

PRESIDENT'S REMARKS

Amy Yost, Principal, Mill Hill School, Fairfield

As I stand before you one final time to address this incredible community of educators, I want to extend my heartfelt thanks for your support and partnership over the past two years. It has been an honor to lead alongside you during a time of transformation.

Reflecting on the 2024–2025 academic year, it's clear that public education—both in Connecticut and across the nation—has experienced profound and far-reaching change. We've seen a heightened focus on social-emotional learning and school climate, including new mandates for restorative practices and the implementation of climate improvement plans. Legislative shifts have touched nearly every aspect of our work: early childhood care, special education funding, policies limiting student cell phone use, support systems for refugee and immigrant students, and workforce development initiatives designed to meet the demands of a changing world. While teacher shortages and burnout remain persistent challenges, we've also seen encouraging momentum in the areas of mental health support and targeted investments in early learning.

At the federal level, bold and polarizing policies have taken center stage—most notably a proposed nationwide school voucher program and an executive order restricting classroom content, shaping not just what we teach but how we engage in discourse. Meanwhile, here in Connecticut, we've forged ahead with our own set of reforms: limiting the use of crisis drills in schools, modernizing the teacher certification process, and expanding our curriculum to include Asian American and Pacific Islander studies. And yes—just in case you hadn't heard—we're also preparing to integrate AI (not A1) into instruction for grades 7 through 12. So if you weren't sure what the next frontier was, the robots are officially here.

Despite these sweeping changes, one thing remains constant: your leadership is the anchor. You show up. You lead. You innovate. You care.

And before we wrap up, I'd like to leave you with some sound advice from the elementary lens—because sometimes, in the midst of policy changes, data dashboards, and strategic plans, it helps to go back to the basics. As the old saying goes, *"All I really need to know I learned in kindergarten."* Share everything, play fair, be kind to one another, say you're sorry, clean up your own mess, warm cookies and cold milk are good for you, when you go out into the world, watch out for traffic, hold hands, and stick together. Simple, timeless truths—still relevant, even if now we have to add: limit your screen time, don't let AI write your essays, and yes, wash your hands *a lot*.

Sometimes, it's those early lessons—kindness, cooperation, curiosity—that remain the most important guideposts in this complex work we do.

Thank you for your commitment to the students of Connecticut. Together, we will continue to build a brighter future for all. Before inviting our Executive Director, Dr. Glenn Lungarini, to the podium, please join me in acknowledging and expressing our gratitude to Glenn and Karen Packtor for orchestrating this wonderful afternoon.