



WILLIAM CIESLUKOWSKI
OUTSTANDING FIRST-YEAR PRINCIPAL AWARD
NOMINATION FORM 2009-2010
(Deadline for Submission is September 11, 2009)

Name Jeffrey Solan _____, Principal

School Dodd Middle School _____

Address 100 Park Place _____ Town/City Cheshire _____ Zip 06410

Have you confirmed the nominee's school membership in CAS? ☒ Yes ☐ No

1. How has the nominee's instructional leadership, innovative practices, and managerial or organizational skills had a positive impact on the school district this year? (Please attach and limit your answers to a total of six typed pages, double spaced.)
2. Show how the nominee has shown indications of being a risk taker, a visionary, and the ability to overcome adversity. (Please attach)
3. The candidate will submit a resume. (Please attach)
4. Two letters of recommendation. (Please attach)

Scott Detrick, Assistant Superintendent

Name and Title of Nominator

Scott Detrick
Signature of Nominator**

203-250-2400

Telephone Number of Nominator

(**If signed by staff members, signature indicates support of the majority of the staff)

ENDORSEMENT BY SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

Greg J. Florio
Typed Name of Superintendent

Greg J. Florio
Signature of Superintendent

SEND COMPLETED NOMINATION FORM TO:

Regina S. Birdsell, Assistant Executive Director
Connecticut Association of Schools
30 Realty Drive
Cheshire, Connecticut 06410

William Cieslukowski

Outstanding First-Year Principal Award

1. How has the nominee's instructional leadership, innovative practices, and managerial or organizational skills had a positive impact on the school district this year?

As a first-year principal of Dodd Middle School in Cheshire, Mr. Jeff Solan is an innovative instructional leader who possesses strong interpersonal and organizational skills that contribute to his success as an educational leader. His impact on the Cheshire Public Schools has been significant. He exemplifies the attributes outlined in Connecticut's Common Core of Leading. Jeff works with staff members, parents, and students to translate the school's vision into school-based strategic planning initiatives and objectives. He values the participation of members of the Dodd School community in developing a common understanding of the learning initiatives for the school year and is committed to using student learning as the basis for evaluating school success.

Jeff Solan establishes a climate of collegiality and cooperation where staff members accept collective responsibility for improving the teaching and learning process at Dodd Middle School. He fosters an expectation that teachers engage in conversations about teaching, learning and assessment practices. Meetings at Dodd are focused on student learning and teachers often reflect on the impact of their professional beliefs, expectations, and practices related student learning achievement standards. During the 2008 - 2009 school year, Jeff created a common professional development goal to target a writing need identified through CMT results. He encouraged interested staff members to explore promising instructional and programmatic alternatives to enhance writing achievement at the middle school level for all students, and most

importantly, low performing writers. The achievement results as measured by the Connecticut Mastery Writing Test demonstrated that seventh graders improved from 78% at goal to 81% meeting this standard; and eighth graders moved from 84% to 89% at the goal level standard. Subgroup improvements in writing were even more impressive with 80% of a target group of needy writers moving from basic or below basic levels to proficiency. As an instructional leader, Jeff believes that all students can attain high levels of achievement and respects the unique qualities of each learner. He is committed to helping all students develop self-confidence and competence during the transitional middle school years.

Jeff's leadership style is one that includes others in the decision-making process. He seeks the input of staff members, parents, and community members in determining appropriate organizational structures and resource allocation at Dodd Middle School. Jeff understands the interrelationships among staff selection, staff evaluation, professional development, and school improvement and uses a calm (and at times, humorous) approach to build trust and rapport. Jeff purposefully promotes and reinforces a culture of staff collaboration and collegiality by sharing decision-making authority and delegating responsibility as staff members pursue improved teaching and learning practices. Jeff recognizes and trusts the professional expertise of his staff and links school improvement needs to strategic planning objectives.

Jeff Solan works well with staff members to implement programs and instructional strategies that incorporate diverse perspectives at the middle school level as well as promote the achievement of school strategic planning initiatives. Jeff provides linkages and connections between and among events occurring in and outside of the school environment to enhance the learning process for the

teachers and students as evidenced by his involvement and commitment to the annual Washington D.C. trip. Jeff took an active role in working with his teachers to revise the trip itinerary to make the experience more meaningful and productive for his students including the use of student-made informational videos and podcasts that were available on buses and at various attractions to enhance the learning experience.

Jeff organizes Dodd Middle School with fairness, equity and high expectations for all learners. He encourages and supports his staff as they assume responsibility for their own learning and professional development. Jeff is active in developing his own professional growth as evidenced by his participation in the *Training in Special Education Administration for Principals and Other Administrators* during the 2008 – 2009 school year. He values staff participation in the decision-making process and fosters collaboration and commitment to the development and attainment of school goals. Jeff Solan is not only an outstanding first-year principal; he is an outstanding educational leader!

2. Show how the nominee has shown indications of being a risk taker, a visionary, and the ability to overcome adversity.

Jeff Solan utilizes multiple strategies to shape his vision as well as a welcoming climate at Dodd Middle School so that learning is a priority at Dodd Middle School. Jeff implements many strategies including active listening, a sense of humor and staff collaboration to foster a positive school culture. He believes that school culture has an impact on learning and values norms of collegiality in the pursuit of school goals and strategic initiatives. Jeff encourages school community participation in establishing a positive learning climate and works to include community organizations in the life of the school to enhance learning opportunities for his students. In addition, Jeff works closely with all school constituents to develop shared values of openness, mutual respect, support, and inquiry that promote risk taking and innovation. At Dodd Middle School, stakeholders are empowered through shared leadership and risk taking is part of an environment of trust and collaboration.

As principal of Dodd Middle School, Jeff establishes effective routines and procedures to ensure an organized, safe, and positive learning environment. He makes a concerted effort to be visible and to maintain an open door policy. He is excellent at using skills of consensus building and negotiations to problem solve difficult issues and to support teacher learning and growth. Jeff takes the teacher evaluation and professional growth plan very seriously. He believes that providing ongoing support for staff members to reflect on their roles and practices in light of student standards and school initiatives is an important role as an educational leader. Jeff will

take the necessary steps to help each teacher demonstrate success at meeting the Common Core of Teaching standards.

Jeff Solan assumed several leadership responsibilities beyond the school setting. Jeff served as a leader at the district level in many different capacities during the 2008 – 2009 school year. He served as chair of our Strategic Planning Council which met monthly and developed a survey to elicit input from school community members related to our school district's vision, mission statement, goals and objectives. He lead this group to design questions to gain feedback on how best to revise our current strategic plan. Jeff also was a member of our district's Instructional Technology Committee and worked to research applications that would help measure student technology competencies by the eighth grade. Our 2009 Administrators' Summer Retreat was planned by a committee of interested administrators and Jeff took an active role as a member of this team. Our Retreat was successful because of his input, experience, and willingness to take on the additional responsibilities to help plan and implement the three-day workshop sessions. Jeff Solan an effective leader and outstanding principal.

3. The candidate will submit a resume. (attached)

Jeffrey F. Solan

2 Promontory Drive
Wallingford, CT 06492
H 203-265-8005 / C 203-988-4545
JSOLAN@CHESHIRE.K12.CT.US

Leadership Experience

Principal

2008-Present

Dodd Middle School

Cheshire, CT

- Target student learning needs through the development of professional development plans for teachers grounded in CMT data analysis
- Work with teaching staff to utilize the information gleaned from data analysis to create CMT focal areas that capitalize on interdisciplinary opportunities
- Emphasize the integration of technology to maximize student learning opportunities
- Chair the district Strategic Planning Committee, and serve on the district Instructional Technology Committee and Administrative Retreat Planning team
- Work to eliminate performance gaps for gender differences, students from disadvantaged backgrounds, and students with specialized learning needs

Assistant Principal

2005-2008

Dodd Middle School

Cheshire, CT

- Supervise and evaluate staff within the framework of our district professional development plan
- Administrate Pupil Personnel Team meetings including annual reviews, triennials, initial evaluations, and transition meetings.
- Oversee the Student Assistance Model Team (building level intervention team)
- Review Connecticut Mastery and other data in order to develop strategies that will improve student performance
- Responsible for oversight of Developing Responsible Behavior (student discipline)
- Participate as member of the PTA so students realize the maximum benefit from a solid school-home relationship
- Co-leader of the overhaul of our special education delivery model from infrastructure to delivery of tiered curriculum

Assistant Principal

2004-2005

Ansonia Middle School

Ansonia, CT

- Instruct teachers on the fundamental elements of curriculum design and the delivery of instruction
- Cultivate a cultural shift towards greater academic expectations for all learners

NELMS

2005-2008

New England League of Middle Schools

Topsfield, MA

- Represent Connecticut's Central Region as a voting member of NELMS in 2005
- Presented at the NELMS Conference in 2006
- Participate in committees as assigned by the Chairperson of the Board

Additional Professional Experience

School Counselor

1998-2004

Moran Middle School

Wallingford, CT

- Diffuse conflict and deliver upsetting or sensitive information in a supportive, but direct manner

- Seek out and utilize appropriate community support services as needed
- Develop innovative programs to address the specific needs of our students (multicultural fair, homework club, Internet Safety Program, Decisions Program, Aspiring Spanish Student Program)

Classroom Teacher

1998-2003

Wallingford High School

Wallingford, CT

- Teach English, Personal and Professional Development, and Computer classes to alternative high school students
- Mentor new staff in educating our unique and challenging student population
- Develop and deliver curriculum to educate students who may have learning disabilities, social-emotional issues, and gaps in learning
- Institute programs to meet the specific needs of our students
- Extensive experience with differentiating instruction and utilizing multiple intelligence in the classroom

Education

6th Year Degree, Educational Leadership

2000-2004

Southern CT State University

New Haven, CT

- Completed 30 credit degree with a 3.92 GPA

M.S., Counseling and Psychological Services

1995-1997

State University of NY at Oswego

Oswego, NY

- Earned 51 credit hours with a 3.81 GPA
- Employed 20 hr/wk. at the Mary Walker Counseling Center providing counseling services and crisis intervention for diverse adult population
- Captain of varsity ice hockey team

Professional Development

- Member of the New England League of Middle Schools
- Attended conferences in Effective Instruction, Dealing with Difficult Student, Neurological Impairment, Confidentiality, and Section 504 Law
- Participate in three day ASCD "Understanding by Design" Curriculum Conference in Boston, MA (2002)
- Connecticut Association of Schools New Administrators Mentorship Program

Professional Development Programs Presented

- New England League of Middle Schools assessment team members
- Delivered "writing across the curriculum" and "classroom management" professional development workshops to the Ansonia Middle School faculty.
- Facilitated Wallingford's first ASCD's online professional development program
- Presented a symposium titled "Educational Policies Designed by Educators" at the International Conference on Educational Law, Policy, & Practice at SCSU (2003)
- Guest Speaker, CCSU, Ethics in the Helping Professions (2003)
- Restructured Wallingford's Section 504 procedures for district administration
- Presented an internet safety seminar in coordination with CT State Police for parents and staff at Moran Middle School (2002)
- Develop on-line lessons for Connecticut to use as part of the distance learning consortium project

4. Two letters of recommendation. (attached)



CHESHIRE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Greg J. Florio, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

Scott Detrick
Assistant Superintendent
for Instructional Services

September 10, 2009

To: William Cieslukowski Outstanding First-Year Principal Award Committee

Jeffrey Solan is an outstanding educator. He continually demonstrates a passion for middle level education and a desire to create a school culture focused on children and their continued academic and social growth. From his first moments as a member of Cheshire's administrative team, he has modeled life-long learning and has been a key contributor to the leadership initiatives in our schools. Within a short period of time after joining the Cheshire Public Schools as Assistant Middle School Principal, I was confident that when the next principal would be needed, Jeff would fill the position.

Mr. Solan followed in the footsteps of a respected seventeen-year veteran principal at Dodd Middle School, and that transition is never easy. However, there was no doubt among the staff at Dodd Middle School that Jeff was the right person. He had gained their respect as Assistant Principal and he demonstrated in his first year as principal that they were correct in their judgment. He also has demonstrated that he is his own man, building on the positives in place, but continuously seeking areas where improvements could be made.

Jeff has also been instrumental in district-wide initiatives. He has served as administrative coordinator of the Cheshire Strategic Planning Initiative. This role oversees a key district committee focused on the strategic plan. The challenge during Jeff's term as coordinator was that the plan was approaching its tenth year and the need to review the initiative's relevance and success had to be undertaken. Jeff guided the process to develop a survey that will efficiently and effectively gather the data needed to evaluate the current plan and develop the next generation of the plan for our community.

In my tenure as Superintendent, and prior to that as Assistant Superintendent, I have worked with many administrators and witnessed many struggle in the first year of a new challenge. Jeffrey Solan's successful transition into the Principalship of Dodd Middle School is certainly one of the most effective I have witnessed. It is without reservation that I support Jeffrey Solan's nomination for the Connecticut Association of Schools' William Cieslukowski Outstanding First-Year Principal Award.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Greg J. Florio".

Greg J. Florio, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools



CHESHIRE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Greg J. Florio, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

Scott Detrick
Assistant Superintendent
for Instructional Services

September 9, 2009

William Cieslukowski Outstanding First-Year Principal Award Nominating Committee,

It is an honor that we write this letter of recommendation for Mr. Jeffrey Solan, a candidate for the William Cieslukowski Outstanding First-Year Principal of the Year Award. Our knowledge of Jeff's qualifications for this prestigious award comes from our experience working with him in the roles of assistant principal and principal at Dodd Middle School in Cheshire. Mr. Solan is an exceptional school leader demonstrating high standards for student learning and a unique ability to help all learners achieve and succeed. As an instructional leader, Jeff is knowledgeable about all areas of the curriculum and has an excellent understanding of research-proven instructional practices. Jeff also demonstrates strong interpersonal skills necessary for success working as a member of a team as well as leading others in a learning community. He is able to communicate clearly; interact positively with teachers, students, parents and community members; acknowledge the viewpoints of others while maintaining his own beliefs; and act as a liaison among various constituencies. Jeff often demonstrates that he is a leader among his peers as he willingly takes on leadership responsibilities at the district level. During the 2008 – 2009 school year, Jeff served as chair of our District Strategic Planning Council. This Council, under Jeff's leadership, developed a survey to elicit feedback from school community members to help in the process of redefining our District's vision, mission, and goals.

Jeff Solan is an exceptional candidate for the William Cieslukowski Outstanding First-Year Principal Award for many reasons including:

- Planning, presenting and following-up with implementation of professional development in a number of curricular areas to promote communities of practice at Dodd Middle School,
- Demonstrating creative problem-solving and excellent decision-making abilities in the daily operation of his school as well as through input at district-level meetings,
- Creating a school environment that meets the needs of all students within an "inclusive" instructional setting at the middle school level,
- Working with teachers to differentiate instruction to provide learning opportunities that are rigorous and relevant,
- Incorporating the use of data to guide instructional decisions through common assessments,
- Developing and implementing new programs to meet the individual needs of the middle school student in a changing world as evidenced by the shift to a more technology-based applied technology class,
- Implementing technology by integrating various applications as a tool to enhance the teaching and learning process, and
- Possessing an excellent sense of humor that enables him to view difficult situations in a positive light.

Mr. Jeffrey Solan is an outstanding educational leader. Jeff is the kind of principal who makes the people around him better at what they do through his positive and enthusiastic approach to the many challenges while leading a learning community. Jeff Solan is most deserving of the William Cieslukowski Outstanding First-Year Principal Award.

Sincerely,

Scott Detrick
Assistant Superintendent for Instructional Services
Cheshire Public Schools

George York
Math Department Leader
Dodd Middle School