

# THE CONNECTICUT ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS

## *The Fifty-Fourth Annual Meeting*

*May 11, 2006*

### 2005-2006 ANNUAL REPORT

## CONNECTICUT ASSOCIATION OF MIDDLE SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

*Submitted by Jody Goeler, Chair*

Your middle level association continues to provide high quality service to its member schools, administrators, and teachers, thanks in large part to the dedicated committee members who consistently give of their time and share their talents. Some of the highlights for 2005-2006 include:

- ▶ **CAS Middle Level Division Adopts Certification Position** Our primary area of focus and energy has been directed towards ensuring our middle schools are staffed with teachers trained to work most effectively with young adolescents. As a result of the first New England Middle Level Symposium held in New Hampshire in January, and in response to Commissioner Sternberg's "Education Continuum for Attracting and Retaining Highly Qualified Teachers," the Middle Level Division of CAS has adopted a position statement on middle level certification. While middle level certification regulations are among the strongest in the nation, requiring 24 credits in a major content area and 30 hours of specialized middle level training, there are factors that limit their effectiveness and discourage middle level teacher preparation programs. While applauding and supporting aspects of the current certification that require robust content preparation, the CAS Middle Level Division is urging adjustment that will promote strong middle level teacher preparation programs and provide a large pool of middle school teachers who are highly qualified when they enter the middle level. Middle School students deserve highly qualified teachers as much as do elementary and high school students. Adoption of the recommendations outlined in the Position Statement on Middle Level Certification will go a long way towards attracting and retaining highly qualified middle school teachers in the future. However, this statement is just the beginning.

As a result of this symposium, our team, including middle level principals, members of the Connecticut State Department of Education, and Earle Bidwell, were energized and poised to make a difference. Meeting back at CAS after this Symposium, our team continued discussions, and strategized on ways we could most successfully address our goal. In addition, we added members whose voices would provide valuable contributions towards making a successful action plan. Through several meetings and with the support of the Middle Level Board, this group has planned and implemented a PowerPoint presentation and has held discussions with a variety of stakeholders including the Connecticut delegation at the New England League of Middle Schools Conference in March and a CAS sponsored Middle School Principals Conversation on May 2nd. In addition, our PowerPoint will be presented to various superintendent groups and the State Department of Education Committee charged with updating certification regulations.

This has been an extraordinary collaborative undertaking and could have a positive and lasting impact on every one of our state's schools with middle level grades.

- ▶ **Canton Middle Schools on T.R.A.K.**  
Twenty Five Canton Middle School students, teachers and administrators arrive as early as 6:30 a.m. twice a month for the T.R.A.K. Program. Designed to promote "Tolerance, Respect, Acceptance and Kindness," this program focuses on building and sustaining positive school climate. The T.R.A.K. program is this year's winner of the Arthur Director Middle School Student Leadership Award. Named for the founder of Connecticut Lighting Centers and a true friend of middle school education, the award is given annually to a school that exemplifies the theme of the Middle Level Leadership Conference, "Making Acceptance Acceptable".

▶ **The Annual CAS Middle Level Leadership Conference**

Moving the annual Student Leadership Conference from March to January proved to be well received. Presented by the CAS Middle Level Leadership Committee under the leadership of Joe Scheideler and sponsored by the Connecticut Lighting Centers, the conference attracted a record fifty-five Connecticut middle level schools. When asked to list the parts of the conference that were most valuable, students wrote that they liked meeting new people, communicating with others, incorporating leadership skills into activities and accepting people for who they are as the highlights. Quinnipiac University continues to be a gracious and receptive host for this annual conference.

Similar to previous years, this conference featured two advisor sessions. The first was a sharing session facilitated by Mansfield Assistant Superintendent, Fred Baruzzi and the second by William Howe, Multicultural Education/Gender Equity Consultant for the CT State Department of Education.

▶ **Middle Level Schools with practices to support Exemplary School Climate**

Several CAS middle level schools were recognized this year for their exemplary climate practices. They are East Hartford Middle School, Eastern Middle School, Mystic Middle School, Old Saybrook Middle School, Sage Park Middle School, and Suffield Middle School. As a service to other schools wishing to improve their school climate, award winners welcome inquiries and visitors.

▶ **Month of the Young Adolescent**

In a reception/media event attended by middle level educators and media representatives on October 1, 2005 at Old Saybrook Middle School, Earle Bidwell, Assistant Executive Director of CAS, and Rochelle Schwartz, Chairperson of the CAS Honors and Awards Committee and Principal of Northeast Middle School in Bristol, officially announced that October has been designated as the Month of the Young Adolescent. Old Saybrook Middle School is the 2005-2006 CAS Middle School of the Year.

▶ **In Partnership with the Education Department and Southern Connecticut State University**

The middle level division of CAS is partnering with our Department of Education at SCSU to provide quality fieldwork experiences for secondary school education majors. Under the direction of Dr. Steven Greengross, SCSU students complete a forty hour field experience, divided equally between high school and middle school, in an academic discipline of his/her choice. Over thirty CAS member middle schools have expressed interest in hosting these teachers-in-training.

Students will spend an average of three to four hours per week in the classroom focusing on observation of the teaching/learning process, and working with students on a one-to one basis. The students write reflective pieces on the topics of classroom environment, classroom management, constructivism, diversity, higher order thinking skills and assessment relative to their observations.

▶ **Award to our CAS Assistant Executive Director for Middle Level**

Congratulations to Earle Bidwell, Assistant Executive Director for Middle Level, earning the James P. Garvin Distinguished Service Award, the New England League of Middle School's most prestigious award. Mr. Bidwell was presented this award at Monday, March 7<sup>th</sup>'s General Session at NELM's annual conference in Providence Rhode Island. We are all very proud of Earle and grateful for the many contributions he continues to make on behalf of middle level education in New England.