

Coventry Public Schools

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PRESS RELEASE

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COVENTRY ADMINISTRATOR NAMED HIGH SCHOOL PRINCIPAL OF THE YEAR

Coventry Public Schools is proud to announce that Joseph Blake, principal of Coventry High School (CHS) and resident of Suffield, CT, has been selected as the *2019 High School Principal of the Year*. Blake is only the third administrator in Connecticut's history to have received both the *Assistant Principal of the Year Award* and the *Principal of the Year Award*. He was named the state's top assistant principal in 2014 when he was an administrator at Suffield High School.

Blake was nominated for the award by CHS Assistant Principal Steve Merlino who is, himself, a former assistant principal of the year. Upon receiving the news of his selection, Blake stated, "I am honored to be the 2019 CAS High School Principal of the Year. It is a much appreciated recognition of the positive culture and academic success created by the dedication of the teachers, administrators, staff, students, and families in Coventry. All of Coventry shares this award!"

Given his imprint on the CHS community, one would assume Blake has been there for decades, yet he is just finishing up his fifth year as principal. Upon entering the school building and meeting Blake, which is inevitable given his ubiquity in the hallways and classrooms, one is immediately struck by how deeply invested and intimately involved he is in all facets of the school operation. "Joe is a soup-to-nuts administrator," says Merlino. "He is so much more than the organizational chief of the school. He is a tutor, interventionist, data manager, presenter, scheduler, counselor, advisor, guide and sounding board to the entire school community."

Blake is a passionate child advocate who goes to work each day with the goal of connecting with students and driving them forward toward success. He takes a personal interest in them as individuals, monitors their academic progress, and works with staff to ensure they have the supports they need to excel. Students appreciate and respond to his authenticity and attentiveness. Sarah Sullivan, a senior at CHS, says, "Mr. Blake knows when something is up. He will stop us in the hallway because he sees something on our face. There is nothing better than having an adult who wants the best for you." Classmate Hannah LeVasseur adds, "It's not fake. You can tell Mr. Blake genuinely wants to be here. He wants to get to know you and see you grow." And, senior Nancy Conti, beams, "It is nice to know that someone believes in me."

Parents, too, see the positive impact of Blake's efforts to connect with their kids. Tara Wesoloskie, parent of a 9th grader, shares, "It is very special to see how well Mr. Blake knows our kids. He gets to know them on a personal level and has a handle on their entire experience. Mr. Blake pushed our son further than

even we thought he could go.” Rebecca Kennedy, who has a 10th grader at CHS, observes, “Mr. Blake connects with every student on the spectrum and knows how to motivate everyone.”

Blake’s ability to build strong relationships with students extends with equal success to his staff. The most recent school climate survey revealed that 98% of the staff are happy and feel valued and professionally challenged. Social Studies Department Chair Gary Baumgartner boasts, “I have been here for twenty years and I’ll be here for another twenty if Joe sticks around!” Remarks Gene Marchand, Vice Chairman of the Coventry Board of Education, “When you have a good administrator, the whole team rises. Joe’s staff is empowered and has ownership. You can see they are excited and invested.”

Superintendent, Dr. David J. Petrone said about the achievement, “As the district leader, I could not appreciate more that Joe has been recognized for the consistently outstanding work he does with students, parents, and staff. He has been an asset to the Coventry team since he started with us in 2014.”

Blake and his fellow principals of the year - Alicia Sweet Dawe at the elementary level and Gordon Beinstein at the middle level - will be honored by CAS at the statewide “Celebration of Distinguished Administrators” to be held on October 23, 2019, at Saint Clements Castle in Portland.

The State Principal of the Year Program

The Principal of the Year Program, sponsored annually by the Connecticut Association of Schools, was established in 1984 to bring recognition to the principalship and to spotlight the important role of the principal in shaping the educational environment and experiences of children. The program recognizes outstanding school principals who have succeeded in providing high quality learning opportunities for students. These administrators have demonstrated excellent leadership, commitment to staff and students, service to their communities, and contributions to the overall profession of educational leadership.

Each year nominations are solicited for an Elementary, Middle, and High School Principal of the Year. Nominees must submit a written application which is evaluated by a selection committee consisting of active and retired principals and assistant principals. Site visits are conducted at the schools of the two highest rated candidates at each level (elementary, middle and high). Winners are then chosen based upon the outcome of the site visit as well as the quality of the written application. The three individuals selected for recognition are honored by CAS at an awards dinner in the fall.

The Connecticut Association of Schools

Established in 1953, CAS is a non-profit educational organization working with Connecticut’s school leaders to improve elementary and secondary education in Connecticut. CAS’ core mission - to promote excellence in the education of all students - is achieved through advocacy, professional development, recognition and student programs. CAS represents nearly 900 of the state’s public and parochial schools and is affiliated with the National Association of Secondary School Principals, the Association for Middle Level Education, and the National Association of Elementary School Principals.

This information was provided by Coventry High School. For further information, please contact Joe Blake, Principal at 742-7346 or jblake@coventryct.org.