

News Release

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Poudre School District leader named Outstanding Assistant Principal of the Year for Colorado

Englewood, March 3, 2016 – Melanie Mierzwa, Assistant Principal of Zach Elementary School in the Poudre School District, has been named one of the 2016 Outstanding Assistant Principals of the Year for Colorado by the Colorado Association of School Executives (CASE) and a committee of her peers from the Colorado Association of Elementary School Principals (CAESP).

Upon being notified of this award, Mierzwa stated, “The best part of my job is building relationships with the students, staff and community. It’s an honor for me to be able to represent Zach Elementary and Poudre School District. We get to celebrate together what we’ve achieved as a school.”

An educator for over 16 years, Mierzwa is in her sixth year as assistant principal at Zach Elementary School. In this role, Mierzwa has helped to establish a positive environment for the students, staff and families of Zach Elementary through the school’s Multi-Tier Systems of Support, the organization of enrichment activities for students and teachers and her generous attitude toward building relationships in her community. Described as a teacher-leader and natural collaborator, Mierzwa uses her previous experiences as an elementary and literacy teacher to now guide not only students, but teachers in building and attaining their goals.

Of Mierzwa’s guidance, Zach Elementary Principal Aisha Thomas, said, “As the Assistant Principal, [Mierzwa] has been open to facilitating all aspects of leadership. She is always making decisions through a lens of strategic focus on excellence and continuous improvement.”

Mierzwa recognized that in order to better support both students and teachers, a more hands-on approach to leadership was needed at Zach Elementary. She established coaching days, one or two days a week where she participates directly in classrooms to observe instructional patterns and truly understand the pulse of the school. As part of her mission of support, Mierzwa praises the positive—calling home to parents, writing notes to students and staff, and bringing attention to behaviors and skills that are worth congratulating and emulating. Mierzwa’s supportive practices have contributed to the school’s multiple-year recognition with the John Irwin School of Excellence for Academic Achievement Award and the Governor’s Distinction Award for Academic Growth.

Sandra Smyser, Superintendent of Poudre School District, said, “Melanie has done a tremendous job as assistant principal of Zach Elementary School. She has formed strong relationships with students, staff and parents, making a significant impact on the Zach community. She exemplifies the qualities of a strong leader with her collaborative and supportive approach to helping everyone in the school be their best. We are thrilled to participate in celebrating the work of this extraordinary educator.”

Zach Elementary School is a suburban school located in Fort Collins and is part of the Poudre School District, the ninth largest school district in Colorado. Serving over 630 students from kindergarten to fifth grade, Mierzwa and the team at Zach Elementary work tirelessly to meet their ever-changing needs and live up to the school’s motto of “Together we Inspire.”

“We know that the relationship between principals and the school community is a powerful one, and CASE is proud to recognize the outstanding efforts of Melanie Mierzwa and to honor her as a leader in Colorado education,” CASE Executive Director Bruce Caughey said. “Her work as Assistant Principal directly impacts and positively influences the students of Zach Elementary—she is an inspiration for those endeavoring to deliver on the promise of public education.”

Mierzwa was selected for this honor by her peers through a rigorous and competitive process facilitated by the Colorado Association of Elementary School Principals (CAESP), a department of CASE and affiliate of the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP). The Outstanding Assistant Principal of the Year program is sponsored by CAESP, CASE and McGraw Hill Education.

The award recognizes the exceptional leadership of those responsible for the day-to-day operations of PreK-8 schools. By recognizing the efforts of these leaders in education, the award instills pride in their accomplishments and reinforces their leadership in helping children develop a lifelong love of learning.

CASE and CAESP will formally present Mierzwa with her award at an upcoming school event during National Assistant Principals Week, which takes place the week of April 11-15, 2016. She and other CASE award winners also will be recognized at an awards ceremony this spring, as well

as at the 47th Annual CASE Education Leadership Convention this summer in Breckenridge.

The Colorado Association of School Executives (www.co-case.org) is the preeminent professional association for public school administrators in Colorado. The organization's mission is to empower Colorado education leaders through advocacy, professional learning and networking to deliver on the promise of public education.

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CAES

Colorado Association of
Educational Specialists

CAESP

Colorado Association
of Elementary
School Principals

CALET

Colorado Association of
Leaders in Educational
Technology

CASPA

Colorado Association
of School Personnel
Administrators

CASSA

Colorado Association
of Superintendents and
Senior Administrators

CASSP

Colorado Association
of Secondary
School Principals

DBO

Department of
Business Officials