



To: Members of the Hollis Brookline School Community
From: Bridey Bellemare, Executive Director, New Hampshire Association of School Principals
Re: A Special Award for your Principal and your Community
Date: April 23, 2021

It is my distinct pleasure to announce that your Principal, Mr. Rick Barnes, has been selected, by our organization, as New Hampshire's High School Principal of the Year for 2021-22.

After having met with several guest panels from Mr. Barnes' school community, members of the selection committee cited, "In speaking with students, staff and parents of Hollis Brookline High School, it is clear that Rick is truly beloved. His calm and cool demeanor make him approachable to everyone. He listens attentively and is responsive to students' and staff members' concerns and ideas. Rick should be commended for his work in highlighting a grassroots movement amongst his students in the area of equity and diversity. In addition, Rick was instrumental in creating opportunities for teachers to provide a tiered system of interventions for students through the CAV Block. During his tenure, Rick has provided Hollis Brookline High School with a number of innovative and inclusive systems and programs, which have benefited *all* students."

Students who were interviewed said, "Mr. Barnes believes in the school's values of integrity and individuality. He brings a positive feeling and a bright personality and attitude to school every day. Especially now, where everything is so warped, this is a really nice thing...it can really help during a school day...it makes you want to come to school."

When asked why they felt Mr. Barnes was deserving of this award, the students said, "He genuinely cares about all students. He is a very positive person-super generous with his time and both easy and enjoyable to talk to. In terms of building community, he always makes time for us to listen to our concerns and help us make a tangible plan to address our concerns. He never backs down from a challenge-keeping our school open during a pandemic, fighting for what students need-he never brushes anything under the rug."

Members of the parent panel shared that, "Rick is a good communicator, caring person, and a good listener." One school board member (also a parent) noted that, "In terms of policy and procedures Rick has helped to breakdown some barriers to some older, more traditional practices...resulting in more students being recognized for achievements that extend beyond academic standing alone. Additionally, he is very responsive to student issues and concerns...students feel heard by him."

One set of parents shared how Rick helped their child with a disability excel both within and beyond the school culture stating, "Rick has always been super supportive. He is attentive, approachable, and accessible. We never felt like we were a part of the system. He helped us to overcome boundaries to help our son. He found internships that helped our son grow as a part of this transition for life beyond high school. The attention we got from Rick was exceptional. He went above and beyond what anyone would do to help our child, who is now a man, excel."

The staff at Hollis Brookline shared that, “Rick is continuously looking for ways in which he might better both the people and the institutions surrounding him. It’s no secret this year has been a massive challenge for educational institutions across the board, but our leadership and administrative team has allowed us to weather the storm and see a huge degree of success in both anticipating and managing every individual trial that has come our way. This resilience, in the face of substantial adversity is due, in no small part, to Rick’s steady guidance and consistent messaging.”

One staff member shared that, “In all my interactions with Rick over the years, I would say that the most consistently representative characteristics I have observed would be his fairness in approach, a certain unbending commitment to making not only the logical decisions in sometimes quite difficult circumstances, but the moral ones at that...and also his unique ability to communicate and promote inclusive visions on a micro and macro level.”

Lastly the staff said, “Rick is whole-child focused and always creates and supports opportunities for us to try new things...he is always available and supportive. His legacy for this school will remain grounded in integrity, honesty, and trust.”

When Superintendent Andy Corey was asked why Rick was deserving of this prestigious award, he shared that “Rick has an ability to stay calm in the face of adversity...his level-headedness and calmness leads to his ability to de-escalate challenging situations. His ability to balance time, energy, and priorities has taken Hollis Brookline High School to a very good place over the past seven years. He has transformed the culture. There is very little turn-over...staff want to stay.”

Superintendent Corey also highlighted how Rick helped transform the way student services are delivered during CAV Block stating, “By putting all students into Power School Scheduler, we can now see where all students are and what help they need. The concept moved from a homework block to a model where students are now receiving the individualized support they need across all core curricular areas.”

As this year’s NH High School Principal of the Year (POY), Rick will be recognized in front of his peers and family members during a modified ceremony hosted by the NH EDies this June. Additionally, this May, NHASP will be hosting a private formal dinner event for all of this year’s POY award recipients. Rick will be recognized for his outstanding accomplishment among this cohort of leaders. It is our hope that your community will also find a special way to recognize Rick for this exceptional achievement.

Congratulations, Rick! We are proud to have you representing the best of school leadership in the state of New Hampshire.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bridey Bellemare". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being more prominent.

Bridey Bellemare,
Executive Director

