

National Distinguished Principal

Robert Palazzo Named Pennsylvania's 2022 National Distinguished Principal



Robert Palazzo, Principal of Panther Valley Elementary School (PVES) in the Panther Valley School District (PVSD), in Carbon County, has been named **Pennsylvania's 2022 National Distinguished Principal (NDP)** by the Pennsylvania Principals Association. As a state winner in the National Association of Elementary School Principals' (NAESP) National Distinguished Principal (NDP) Program, Mr. Palazzo was honored by NAESP and the PA Principals Association at special award ceremonies in October.

Dr. Jonathan G. Ross, President of the PA Principals Association and Chair of the NDP Selection Committee, said, "Our committee is pleased to announce Robert Palazzo as the 2022 Pennsylvania National Distinguished Principal. During his tenure as principal, PVES has been transformed into a community-focused learning environment that partners with multiple businesses and organizations to provide an exemplary program for the children in

their care. Whether spearheading an effort to build his students a playground or promoting literacy by bringing the school "Book Buggy" to local events, Mr. Palazzo stops at nothing to secure needed services for his students. As a result, the teachers, staff and community at large feel a part of something greater than themselves that will undoubtedly shape the lives of a generation of children for the better. We have no doubt that Mr. Palazzo represents everything that is great about Pennsylvania principals and will represent us well on the national stage."

Mr. Palazzo served in his current role as the principal at Panther Valley Elementary School (K-3) since 2017. Previously, he was a school psychologist in the Palmerton Area School District from 2008-2017.

Under Mr. Palazzo's leadership, the first pre-kindergarten program within PVSD was established; a playground for students was built through community-based, grassroots fundraising within 18 months; and in collaboration with St. Luke's University Health Network, a family development specialist position was created in the district to help increase preventative factors and decrease barriers within the community. Mr. Palazzo explained, "This school year, we opened the first pre-kindergarten class in the history of the district and have plans to expand the program for the following year by opening an early learning center."

Mr. Palazzo is a member of the Pennsylvania Principals Association and the National Association of Elementary School Principals. In 2021, he was awarded the Pennsylvania Community Star by the National Organization of State Offices of Rural Health for his collaborative efforts with St. Luke's University Health Network.

According to PA Principals Association Executive Director, Dr. Eric C. Eshbach, "In the current environment where school leaders are struggling to address learning loss, the social-emotional needs of students and the varying demands of parents and communities, the selection of Robert Palazzo as Pennsylvania's National Distinguished Principal for 2022 sends a powerful message to our members. Mr. Palazzo has a keen understanding of each of these issues and has developed practices in his school that other principals should be clamoring to replicate. The Pennsylvania Principals Association has a history of awarding the NDP honor to principals who become mentors for others and leaders in our state. I am confident Robert will live up to that tradition."

Mr. Palazzo earned a Bachelor of Science in psychology, a Master of Science in school psychology and his Certificate in Advanced Study in School Psychology from the State University of New York (SUNY) at Oswego. He received a Master of Education from Wilkes University.

"Much of my success, is due in part to the support and patience of my wife, Katie. We have a five-year-old daughter, Isabel, and a two-year-old daughter, Rose, who keep me busy when I am not at work," he shared.

"Robert Palazzo is a man of good character. He is able to balance his professional career and his family in a manner that is respected by his staff, friends and community. The Panther Valley School District has been fortunate to have Robert Palazzo as Principal."

**- David McAndrew
Superintendent
Panther Valley School District**

Principal of the Year

Ryan J. Caufman Named Pennsylvania's 2022 Principal of the Year



Ryan J. Caufman, Principal of Central York High School in the Central York School District, has been named **Pennsylvania's 2022 Principal of the Year** by the Pennsylvania Principals Association. As a state winner in the National Association of Secondary School Principals' (NASSP) Principal of the Year Program, Mr. Caufman was also under consideration to be named the National Secondary Principal of the Year. He is currently deployed with the PA Army National Guard to the Middle East. This is his third overseas deployment in his 22 years of service with the Army. Prior to his deployment in September, Mr. Caufman received his award at a special award presentation in his district.

According to PA Principals Association Executive Director, Dr. Eric C. Eshbach, "We congratulate Ryan Caufman, an exceptional leader and principal, for being named the 2022 Secondary Principal of the Year. He was selected to receive this esteemed award by a committee of his peers from the PA Principals Association for his leadership and outstanding contributions to his school, his students and his community. Additionally, he was instrumental in the creation and implementation of numerous programs at Central York High School which have had a significant impact on school culture and helped many students. We are extremely proud to have him represent our association and secondary principals across Pennsylvania."

An educator for 24 years, Mr. Caufman served in his current role as the principal at Central York High School for 14 years. Previously, he was a secondary mathematics teacher and assistant principal in the West Shore School District. Before he became principal of Central York High School, he served for two years as an assistant principal. In addition, Mr. Caufman is an officer in the Pennsylvania Army National Guard, serving proudly for the past 21 years.

Under Mr. Caufman's exemplary leadership, numerous programs and initiatives have been developed and implemented in his school. A direct result of his efforts is the customization of the high school educational program. "I am proud of the hard work that administrators and teachers have done to develop a variety of learning experiences, allowing students to learn at different rates, in a variety of styles, while engaging in areas of interest that prepare them for their preferred future," explained Mr. Caufman. Another program that has had tremendous success with some of their most at-risk students is the *Panther Pathways program*. This school-wide program provides struggling learners the opportunity to complete credit recovery, while providing group and individual counseling through a partnership with a private agency. According to Caufman, "*Panther Pathways* has helped 116 at-risk students overcome their obstacles and graduate from high school."

In addition, the implementation of the Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (JROTC) has had a significant impact on Central York's school culture and has provided a community for many students who were not engaged in other co-curricular activities. "This program provides students with true leadership opportunities. Students are responsible to lead all activities and events under the mentorship of their instructors. It is an amazing program," said Mr. Caufman.

Mr. Caufman earned a Bachelor of Science in education from Millersville University of Pennsylvania and a Master of Education from Shippensburg University of Pennsylvania.

Mr. Caufman and his wife, Angela, a special education teacher, have two boys, Reid and Victor. In his spare time, he enjoys watching and coaching his sons as they play hockey, lacrosse, baseball and flag football.

"In my 15 years in school administration, I have not encountered a stronger leader than Mr. Caufman. Mr. Caufman has deftly navigated tumultuous times to keep his faculty focused on doing what is best for kids. He takes tremendous pride in the culture and climate of his building...and works tirelessly to do what is best for kids. The Central York community is tremendously fortunate to have him leading for our staff and students alike."

**- Dr. Peter Aiken
Superintendent
Central York School District**