

Wagner named PA Principal of the Year

As principal, Dr. Timothy Wagner has often been called upon to talk with community members, prospective families, educational leaders, and other groups about what makes Upper St. Clair High School special... "the special sauce" as he often refers to it. He is quick to reply, "It's the people – the students, teachers, staff, families as well as a supportive administration and school board." The one role he humbly neglects to mention is the principal.

Dr. Wagner has been named Pennsylvania's 2023 Principal of the Year by the Pennsylvania Principals Association. As a state winner, Dr. Wagner is now a candidate for 2023-24 National Secondary Principal of the Year, a program of the National Association of Secondary School Principals' (NASSP).

"Our assessment of your performance as a building administrator and our careful review of the considerable contributions you have made to our profession left no doubt that we had made the right choice in terms of the person who would represent our state this year," wrote Dr. Maureen Letcher, Pennsylvania Principals Association president.

In earning the honor of Pennsylvania Principal of the Year, Dr. Wagner reflects on the daily successes of his staff and students, and describes his role as principal as a privilege.

"To receive this honor makes me think about all of the amazing things that our staff and students do every day. It is a privilege to support the pursuits of members of our school community," Dr. Wagner said. "As principal of Upper St. Clair High School, I realize that I am part of something much larger than myself. Since I was a young child, Upper St. Clair has represented so much to me — care, community and excellence. It is these traditions that allow us to succeed together."

Dr. Wagner was nominated for the award by Dr. Dan Beck, USCHS assistant principal, with letters of support from students, teachers, parents and district administrators. According to Dr. Beck, it's Dr. Wagner's humility and philosophical beliefs around collective decision-making that help to make Upper St. Clair High School a special place to teach and learn.

"Every aspect of our school culture is modeled around genuine partnerships with students, teachers, parents and our community," Dr. Beck said. "We work through challenges and celebrate successes together. That type of culture in any organization, let alone a high school, is rare. Fortunately, Dr. Wagner shows us that it's not only possible – but it can be fun along the way."

Yoshna Venkataraman, a senior at Upper St. Clair High School, believes that Dr. Wagner demonstrates care for every student through his consistent involvement and encouragement. She credits him and the culture of support he fosters with helping students and staff navigate the difficult times throughout the pandemic.

“Dr. Wagner finds ways to establish relationships with students that are authentic, genuine, and sincere. He greets students as they arrive with a smile on his face, makes it a priority to attend as many sporting events and award ceremonies as possible, and engages us in conversation when observing teachers in our classrooms,” Yoshna said. “What makes him special, however, is the calm and caring demeanor he displays every time a student interacts with him.”

In addition to teaching social studies, Dr. Steve Torquato works in the school’s activities office and serves as an adviser for several student clubs. He recognizes Dr. Wagner’s work to create a school culture in which students and staff feel heard, appreciated and understood.

“Dr. Wagner has worked to help support programming to promote equity and inclusion,” Dr. Torquato said. “He also partners with the activities office and students to develop new clubs to provide an opportunity for each student to feel seen in our school culture.”

The influence and impact of Dr. Wagner’s leadership extends beyond students and teachers. Families recognize the difference he makes academically as well as socially and emotionally.

“Dr. Wagner has implemented several initiatives that promote students’ emotional well-being, such as mental health awareness programs, which include speakers and activities, counseling services that are available to every student around the clock, and stress-reducing activities such as philanthropic sports competitions,” Kelly Powell, Upper St. Clair High School Parent Teacher Organization president, said. “These initiatives help students balance the pressures of school and life.”

Dr. John Rozzo, superintendent of schools, praised Dr. Wagner for his leadership.

“Being named Pennsylvania’s Principal of the Year is an incredible and well-deserved honor for Dr. Wagner,” Dr. Rozzo said. “He has taught at every level within our school district and has a depth of knowledge that is difficult to match. As principal, he has demonstrated tremendous leadership and continues to make a positive impact within and beyond Upper St. Clair High School.”

Dr. Wagner has spent his entire professional career in the Upper St. Clair School District – gaining experience at the elementary, middle school and high school levels. In 2007, he began his teaching career at Streams Elementary School. Throughout his tenure with the district, he has also taught middle-level English and social studies and has served as a gifted education coordinator for students in grades 7-12. From 2013-15, Dr. Wagner served as the middle school English language arts curriculum leader. Dr. Wagner joined the Upper St. Clair High School administration in 2015 as the associate principal for program planning and innovation. He was named the school’s principal in 2019.

“We are incredibly proud of Dr. Wagner for being named Pennsylvania Principal of the Year,” Amy Pfender, assistant superintendent, said. “More importantly, we are grateful for his leadership and service to the children, families and staff of Upper St. Clair.”

Dr. Wagner has previously been recognized by his alma maters, Washington & Jefferson College and the University of Pittsburgh, as well as by the Pennsylvania Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (PASCDC).

In 2017, Dr. Wagner was honored with the [Outstanding Young Alumnus Award](#) from Washington & Jefferson College. He earned similar accolades for his leadership endeavors including the University of Pittsburgh School of Education's 2017 [Early Career Award](#).

In 2014, he received the Outstanding Young Educator Award from the PASCDC. This award recognizes educators who have made an impact on educating the whole child, leadership and contributions to the profession. Two years later, in the fall of 2016, PASCDC named him an Emerging Leader. The [PASCDC Emerging Leader program](#) recognizes and prepares young, promising educators to influence education programs, policy and practice at the state level.

Dr. Wagner earned his undergraduate degree from Washington & Jefferson College. He completed his graduate degree and doctoral studies at the University of Pittsburgh. He is a member of the Pennsylvania Principals Association, NASSP, PASCDC and the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. In addition to his work in the field of education, Dr. Wagner is actively involved in several local community organizations including the [Historical Society of Upper St. Clair](#). He previously served on the boards of the [Community Foundation of Upper St. Clair](#) and [Beverly's Birthdays](#).

Dr. Wagner will be honored at the Pennsylvania Principals Association State Conference held Aug. 6-8 at Alloy King of Prussia and Upper Merion High School in King of Prussia, Pa. He – along with other state winners – will advance in the competition for the 2023-24 NASSP National Principal of the Year. From these state winners, three are named as national finalists and, ultimately, one is selected as the NASSP National Principal of the Year. NASSP honors all state principals of the year at the Principals Institute held each year in Washington, D.C.

To be eligible for Principal of the Year, candidates must have served at least three years as a middle or high school principal and be a member of the National Association of Secondary School Principals and the Pennsylvania Principals Association. Nominations are accepted annually. This year's nomination deadline was Jan. 27, 2023. For more information, visit <https://www.papprincipals.org/awards/secondary-awards/>.

PA Principals Association

Twitter: @PAPRINCIPALS / #PAPRINCIPALS

Facebook - @papprincipalsassociation

<https://www.facebook.com/papprincipalsassociation?scrllybrkr=f72cbde4>

LinkedIn

www.linkedin.com/in/pa-principals-association-41b6121bb/