



DENVER —The Colorado Association of School Executives (CASE) is thrilled to recognize Hidden Lake High School assistant principal, Dr. Jimmy Chism, as the 2023 Secondary School Assistant Principal of the Year for Colorado. Dr. Chism was selected by a committee of his peers through a highly competitive process facilitated by the Colorado Association of Secondary School Principals (CASSP), a department of CASE and the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP).

Dr. Chism is just two years into his role as assistant principal at Hidden Lake High School, an alternative high school with an emphasis on developing strong relationships with students to help bolster their

achievement and success. In those two years, his impact has been significant. At the start of the 2021-22 school year, the school surveyed both students and staff about how they perceive the culture and climate of Hidden Lake. With only 58% of respondents providing favorable feedback, Dr. Chism took the lead on making major improvements to foster a more inclusive and supportive school environment. The school began working towards attainment of a High Reliability Level 1 certification through the Marzano framework, and dug into enhancing their restorative practices, staff training on strengthening student-teacher connections and more robust social emotional learning offerings.

In only one year's time, the results have been transformative. When surveyed this fall, 75% of respondents had favorable feedback when asked questions about the culture, safety and relationships between staff and students at Hidden Lake High School. As one student shared, "I feel very supported because teachers and staff acknowledge their students and care for their education and what happens (to us) out of school. (This is) a safe environment where students can be themselves and not be judged for it."

Another area in which Dr. Chism's leadership really shines is his investment in making system-wide improvements and building capacity for both students and staff to be more involved. During the 2021-22 school year, he developed a plan for establishing a school-wide Professional Learning Community that initially focused on the areas of STEM, Humanities, restorative practices, and interventionist teams. Implementation proved very successful and resulted in Hidden Lake High School receiving a grant that funded training for four staff members and the administrator team. The result of this work has been a greater sense of empowerment among teachers, more involvement in decision-making at the staff level, and enhanced leadership among students.

To a person, Dr. Chism's colleagues describe him as someone who goes out of his way to support and connect with students, particularly those who are struggling most.

"Dr. Chism is frequently heard saying, 'If not us, then where?'," said Hidden Lake High School Principal James Stewart. "His heart and dedication for our students that have seen extraordinary life events shines through. He does what is right for students first and always keeps our staff focused on that."

One of Hidden Lake's teachers similarly commented on the way Dr. Chism identifies what the specific needs and struggles of a particular student are and then tailors his approach accordingly. "There is not a day that goes by that I do not see him going out of his way to support someone and it is in that action that you can find what makes him so successful as an educator," said this teacher.

Upon learning he was named Colorado Secondary School Assistant Principal of the Year, Dr. Chism was humbled and resisted taking any credit. "I'm incredibly honored to represent Westminster Public Schools and Hidden Lake High School," he told CASE. "I'm excited that this award will allow me to tell our school and district's story. I really see this award more as something our community received as whole because there is no one person that makes it such a remarkable place--it's our staff and students that truly make it what it is." Chism would also like to thank his wife Geimi for her love and constant support.

Dr. Chism will be recognized this spring at the 2023 CASE Awards Reception. He will also represent Colorado at the NASSP National Principals Conference this summer and be eligible for the National Secondary School Principal of the Year award.

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*The Colorado Association of School Executives ([www.co-case.org](http://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.*