DENVER - The Colorado Association of School Executives (CASE) is thrilled to recognize Gypsum Middle School assistant principal, Torrey Kaddatz, as the 2023 Middle School Assistant Principal of the Year. Kaddatz 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).

In his 15 years at Gypsum Creek, Kaddatz's leadership has dramatically shifted and improved the school's approach to student discipline. With the well-being and safety of students and staff squarely in mind, he has over a period of years redesigned the approach to Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports. Gypsum Creek no longer thinks in terms of punishing students for poor behavior, but instead has a framework in which the focus is on the positive choices and behavior staff wants to see in students. This focus, coupled with an emphasis on thoughtful staff training in de-escalation practices and restorative conversations, has yielded a school culture in which every student feels much safer and more supported.

To further drive the positive culture at Gypsum Creek, Kaddatz makes it a top priority to personally connect every single day with as many students as possible. This includes standing outside the building at the start of the school day to greet middle schoolers individually, visiting with students during lunch and kicking the soccer ball outside on the playground, and joking around with students at the end of the day as they leave the building. As one teacher noted, “For Torrey, relationships are a priority. He consistently refers to ‘lunch duty’ as a relationship-building opportunity and he is out there every day practicing what he speaks. His presence instills a sense of safety and security for students and staff.”

Another area in which Kaddatz's leadership stands out is his clear commitment to professional learning for staff. He works closely with the school leadership team to not just develop the direction for staff training, but to dig into the research and teaching and then lead training sessions himself. His principal David Russell notes that “Attending outside conferences such as AVID, involving himself as a leader on district level committee work, and continually researching best practices gives Torrey the solid knowledge base to work from.”

Integral to professional learning for staff has been training on equitable grading practices and an evolution into standards-based grading. Kaddatz took a leadership role in moving toward this new system of grading and Gypsum Creek clearly demonstrates that learning is a process, and every student learns differently. This means that students may need a variety of ways to showcase their
learning and the school’s shift to a standards-based approach ensures much more accurate, useful and bias-free grading. School principal David Russell told CASE that “Torrey is now viewed not only within our school, but also district-wide, as an expert in how this challenging initiative should work.”

When informed that he was selected as the 2023 Colorado Middle Level Assistant Principal of the Year, Kaddatz shared with CASE that “It was an honor to even be nominated by teachers for this award. I was excited to be chosen to interview, and then I was very proud to be selected as the award recipient. This award means that the work we do at Gypsum Creek Middle School has value and our progress as a great school community is being recognized.”

Kaddatz will be recognized this spring at the 2023 CASE Awards Reception.

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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*