We’re pleased to be in your inbox with our monthly Communication Matters newsletter, in which we highlight district successes, provide updates on relevant news, and pass along pertinent information to bolster your CASE membership.

With that said, we love hearing about innovation in your districts! Is your school or district doing something worthy of a shout-out? Be it a district-wide project, a school-specific milestone or even a staff member who goes above and beyond, we want to know! Be sure to contact CASE Communications Specialist Elisa Wiseman with your story or shout-out for a chance to be featured in a future Communication Matters. Email her at ewiseman@co-case.org.

Spotlight On: Monte Vista School District’s International Science Fair Attendance

In a school district battling high poverty rates, getting kids engaged in academics isn’t an easy feat. But at Monte Vista High School, a decades-long involvement with a science fair is helping the cause.

Since 1982, Monte Vista High has sent at least one student to the Intel International Science and Engineering Fair (ISEF), the world’s largest international pre-college science competition. The location changes every few years, but most recently, it was held in Chicago, IL with contestants hailing from Arkansas to Sydney, Australia.

While no student has ever officially won at the ISEF competition, many have made it to the finals—but getting there at all is an impressive achievement. In order to qualify, students have to win both the regional and state science fair competitions.

“For the last 35 years, we’ve won the regional science fair competitions,” said Monte Vista
Superintendent Robert Webb.

Many of the students who participate are struggling to meet graduation requirements, and are at risk of having to delay their graduations—but by participating in a special Science Seminar course and getting involved with the science fair, they have the opportunity to collect extra academic requirements, keeping them back on track.

“The purpose is a focus for students, trying to get them engaged in school,” Webb said. “It’s helped a lot of students say, ‘Hey, I can do this. I can be here.’”

While students can participate one year and elect not to the next, some students bring an impressive persistence to the fair. Some work on projects for three years, bringing a project they’ve labored on for most of their high school careers. Others present the same project year after year, in an effort to build on their success and show their progress. Regardless of strategy, needless to say, the science fair certainly engages Monte Vista students enough to produce valuable work they take pride in.

Why is Monte Vista High School able to develop such high-quality scientific triumphs? “The quality of the teachers,” according to Webb.

“This is one of our driving programs because there is so much to that you can do in science, and it’s an opportunity for students to learn to be responsible,” he said. “The teachers do a fantastic job… [they’re] just really passionate about having the kids be successful.”

Students participate in a category of their choice, such as animal sciences or physics. One student last year made it to the fair with a project that attempted to map out the impact of unknown stars on orbits of curious planets in different locations.

“It really is a driving force for them,” Webb said. “They just keep going and keep qualifying.”

While Monte Vista is, of course, proud of the students who make it far in the competition, Webb stresses that winning is not necessarily the goal.

“The reason you want to have a project like this is not because you want to win a competition,” he said. “But because you want to learn to be good students and good learners.”

Click here for a video reel of highlights from the 2018 ISEF competition, featuring Monte Vista students as finalists on stage.
AASA’s School Safety Toolkit
As a reminder, The School Superintendents Association’s (AASA) digital School Safety & Crisis Planning Toolkit is a valuable resource of proactive best practices before, during and after a crisis. AASA keeps this toolkit constantly updated with new material, so we highly recommend it as a resource for your districts.

CSFP’s Preliminary List of 2018 District Elections
Earlier this month, the Colorado School Finance Project shared it’s preliminary list of 2018 District Elections. CSFP noted that the material is subject to change, as more current information becomes available. Click here for the most recent draft.

Amendment 73 Efforts
With just about six weeks to go until Election Day, the Yes on Amendment 73 campaign is in full swing. CASE is supporting the campaign efforts and we’ve collected a number of helpful resources that we’ve housed on our website for your reference. On Friday, October 5, many Colorado schools will walk-in together to symbolize their support for K-12 education and a better funding system. Click here for more information.

Rural HR Toolkit
CASPA, in collaboration with CASE, the Colorado Rural Alliance, and BOCES, has created a Rural HR Toolkit. Our goal is to provide a resource for rural school districts, to support the increasing demands of unfunded mandates and limited budgets. Although the concept was derived to support rural districts, we believe this toolkit will be beneficial to all school districts across the state of Colorado. Please click here to access it.

National Principal’s Month
Join us this October as we honor the hard work of Colorado’s principals during National Principal’s Month. Make sure to highlight your principals on social media with the hashtag #ThankAPrincipal. Click here for more resources, provided by NASSP, NAESP and AFSA.

CASE at 50
As we look forward to celebrating the 50th Annual CASE Convention next summer in Breckenridge, Colorado, we ask for our members to help us make sure this is our most special event yet. Please share your favorite Convention memories, highlights and stories (and photos!) here.

Winter Leadership Registration Opening Soon
We look forward to seeing you at our Winter Leadership Conference, Excellence by Association, this February 2019 in Westminster, Colorado. We expect registration to open in late October. Please keep an eye out for upcoming related communications.
In The News

- Here's how some districts would spend their share of a $1.6 billion tax hike for education (Chalkbeat, 9/21/2018)

- Three things we heard at a gubernatorial candidates forum on early childhood (Chalkbeat, 9/18/2018)

- Colorado Education Association fighting teacher shortage with a new campaign to lure young people in the classroom (Denver Post, 9/20/2018)