

TO: Wells-Ogunquit CSD Parents, Community Members, and Members of the School Committee,

My name is Christopher Roche and I am thrilled to announce that I have been named the new Principal at Wells Elementary School. I want to start off by saying how wonderful and inviting the community has been since I arrived in Wells. What really captured my attention about Wells was the degree to which the community cares deeply about the education of all students. I also want to congratulate Marianne Horne on a tremendous career and wish her the very best. It is evident that she has done an incredible job at Wells Elementary.

My philosophy on education is simple, *“Students first! Lead, educate, and inspire students as if your own child was in your class or school. Anything less is not acceptable.”* When you believe in kids and set expectations extremely high, students will meet or exceed the expectations. We must be able to see the success in students that they may not yet be able to see in themselves. When collective efficacy among staff, students, and parents is at a high level, the end result is success at an unprecedented level. I could immediately discern that Wells was a district that put students first. I could also immediately glean that Superintendent Daly was someone whose vision for education and ability to motivate, inspire, and believe in all kids was the ideal match for my skills as a leader. Our ideology and core values are 100% aligned and I cannot wait to get the year started.

I began my educational career as an ed tech in San Antonio, Texas. I then taught 2nd and 3rd grades during my teaching tenure in San Antonio. Subsequently I became an Assistant Principal in San Antonio at campus that was PK-4th. During my tenure at this campus, we were an Exemplary school. It was at that time that I was approached by our Superintendent to go to an intermediate school that was a historically underperforming school of 800 students. During my tenure as Assistant Principal and then Principal at this campus, we saw enormous positive change!

As part of a national reform initiative called the Teacher Advancement Program (TAP), we were evaluated in accordance with a value-added model. In a year’s time, our school went from a value-add level (1) meaning significantly less than the one year’s expected academic growth to a level (5). A level 5 equates to the one year of expected growth plus 2 additional years’ growth in one school year! This culminated in moving from a school that *“Did Not Meet Adequate Yearly Progress”* to a school that *“Met Standard” and received a Gold Star Distinction Designation in Mathematics*. This just corroborates my belief that building the self-efficacy of our students helps them overcome any obstacle!

Moreover, there was a complete transformation of school climate. As a staff, we hosted parent, student, and staff dinners, parent appreciation dinners, and concluded the year with a staff and parent awards’ ceremony. As a 5th and 6th Grade Campus, we brought in the San Antonio Scorpions to host soccer club along with our teachers and offered athletics, art club, history club, student council, science club, gardening club, choir, band, in addition to the myriad academic camps and tutorial sessions that we offered. I bring this up because I am intransigent in my belief that participation in extra-curricular activities correlate to success in all areas.

Utilizing a Positive Behavior Intervention Support system, we were able to provide positive consequences and decrease discipline referrals by 50%. Students truly loved coming to school and our team of educators had the belief that we could achieve anything. I created a Parent Advisory Committee to complement our Student Council and both groups were active members of the decision making processes on campus. Through a total team approach, we were able to achieve unbelievable test scores. More importantly, I know that every student learned well beyond the ability to answer multiple choice questions. Through experiences in every possible club, band, academic competitions, and athletics, students proved that they could excel in everything they put their minds to. This was truly an amazing experience. As a result of this, a research article was written about the success of our school. *“Trust Does Matter.”* I then received an invitation to the UCEA Conference in Washington D.C. to speak about

how transforming school climate and building trust among all stakeholders manifests itself in incredible student achievement.

Subsequently, I served for two years as Principal of a Middle School in Port Aransas, Texas. This was a high performing school and we were just getting started! Through building positive relationships with all students, parents, and staff, we achieved what many thought might not be possible. ***We earned 7 out of 7 Gold Star Distinction Designations for ELA, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, Closing the Achievement Gap, Student Progress, and Post-Secondary Readiness.*** Only 3% of all schools in the state achieved this honor. I strongly believe that a major contributing factor to our success was a reconstruction of the master schedule. Providing targeted interventions, STEM, monthly career days, and recess every day was not common in middle school schedules. In addition, we had a partnership with the Marine Science Institute of the University of Texas just down the road which allowed for students to conduct research and present their science projects to university professors. Our district ranking on Niche increased to #16 out of approximately 1,000 districts.

This past year, I was the Principal at R.D. Seymour School in East Granby, Connecticut. This was a 3rd – 5th grade campus. This was a great experience. I was able to begin a math fact fluency club so that students could work towards demonstrating mastery of the basic facts. Additionally, I worked to set up a mentoring program for students who we felt would benefit from having an additional staff member looking out for the best interest of the child. Mentors were teachers from previous grade levels, teachers in other grades, myself, secretaries, ed techs, custodians, etc.) I also reconstructed the entire Response to Intervention (Student Response Team) process so that it was systematic, data-driven, and individualized to meet the needs of all students. We added a morning brain-based physical activity component to instruction which was far more effective than sitting and learning without movement.

Sometimes in education we mistakenly think that more of the same in terms of recursive review or teaching a concept the same way more than a few times is the answer. It is not and I am of the belief, especially at the elementary level that movement, project-based learning, and empowering students to take ownership of the learning. I had the opportunity to be a judge this past year at the Odyssey of the Mind competition and this exemplified learning at its best, across all learning modalities. Additionally, I was able to observe the Invention Convention where students displayed their ingenuity in creating their own inventions to solve a problem of their choosing. It is amazing what students can accomplish when they develop their own questions, persevere, and own the learning.

This year, I can assure you that I will get to know every student, staff member, and parent by name. Meeting with parents and community members is something I love to do. I will be highly visible on campus and accessible to all stakeholders. The atmosphere will be inviting, the climate very positive, the curriculum intellectually stimulating and staff, students, and parents will look forward to walking through the doors of Wells Elementary.

Those who know me well would tell you that I take no shortcuts, make no excuses, give 110% to everything I do, making every decision through the lens of what is best for students, and utilize a coaching model of leadership. I believe that my best asset as a leader is my ability to get staff, students, and parents to coalesce around a common goal, which is record breaking student achievement. I believe strongly in creating a collaborative and unified vision that transcends the classroom and our school. When we create an atmosphere where collective efficacy permeates our hallways, students will achieve at an unprecedented level. I also don't believe in the notion of being anointed a leader. Leadership is not a title that someone bestows upon you. It is the culmination of one's work ethic, respect garnered, and the ability of the individual to "practice what he/she preaches", or "walking the talk." I am also a firm believer that active listening is essential to great leadership. Honesty, integrity, and a mutual trust and respect will be ubiquitous within our school.

On the issue of honesty, I want to be straightforward and forthright in stating that the last place I will ever be found on campus is in my office. ***I can say from my experience now in 3 states and 5 school districts that being a principal is not an office job. One cannot have a pulse on what is going on in the school from the office. I believe spending time in the office is great after school. Please know this means I may have received an email or phone call and will not know about it until after school. If an emergency arises, please contact the front office so that the situation can be communicated and handled immediately.***

Please know I have had extremely positive parent partnerships in the past and will no doubt continue such partnerships in Wells. Through Principal Coffees, Principal Forums, and other events, you will have the opportunity to speak honestly and openly in a forum designed to continually assess, re-asses and make our school the best possible learning environment. We may not always agree, but in the end, you can rest assured that every decision I make is based on what is best for students. As educators, our job is to look into the future and see the organization not as it is, but what it can ultimately become. I look forward to meeting everyone and together we will make Wells Elementary School the best school in the state.

Respectfully,

Christopher Roche

Principal, Wells Elementary School