



## NSSEO Governing Board Brief

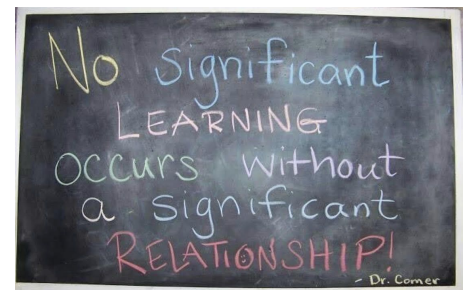
### April 3, 2019

#### April Shining Stars: NSSEO Teacher, Natalie Wojtowicz, her mentor Lauren Olsen and Ben Elsworth, Miner Student reflecting the Power of Professional Learning



The NSSEO Governing Board honored three Shining Stars at the April Board Meeting. The first stars recognized were Natalie Wojtowicz and Lauren Olsen, a mentee/mentor pair from Miner School. Natalie, a first year teacher at Miner School works with students aged 18-22 in the Connections Center. She is a passionate educator who has developed effective teaching strategies and creative instructional practices. Natalie skillfully paves the way to ensure her students reach their positive post-school outcomes. She was recognized for embracing and incorporating new ideas and thoughtfully individualizing to best address every student's needs. Lauren Olsen, Natalie's mentor, was also recognized for the dedication and talents as a mentor, sharing over a decade of experience at Miner. Lauren was a Miner teacher and now serves in a coaching role as the academic design specialist. Lauren's ability to collaborate and support colleagues in designing programs around student needs and engaging in instructional decision-making has been a great part of the program's evolving practices.

A successful mentoring program is built on a culture of shared responsibility and support, shared learning and positive interactions between new and experienced teachers and a defined purpose with well articulated goals. Natalie and Lauren shared these important areas of focus within their mentee/mentor relationship and implemented the concepts emphasized in the NSSEO Mentor Program in their daily practice. Several highlighted topics of the NSSEO Mentor Program that Natalie and Lauren worked on include enhancing partnerships with families, fostering peer to peer relationships between students, promoting a growth mindset, setting and posting clear and rigorous expectations, engaging in more dialogue versus monologue and building relationships and trust.



While all of Natalie's students continue to benefit from her teaching growth, one student made incredible and noteworthy gains. Ben Elsworth, a Miner student from District 214, attends the Connection Center at Miner School. Through Natalie's explicit instruction, setting clear expectations and providing critical feedback, Ben has shown exceptional growth in independent skills throughout the school year. Ben

required many prompts early in the year and through great strategies and an incentive program to complete his morning routine, Ben can now complete the six-step sequence completely independently.

### **Continuous Improvement Plan, Goal 2:**

One of the Continuous Improvement Plan (CIP) goals is highlighted monthly with a NSSEO Governing Board presentation and reflects an update on the aligned dashboard indicators. The April Board update focused on CIP Goal 2, Student Learning Environment. Dr. Pam Radford and Ms. Danielle Carter shared information and updates with the NSSEO Governing Board on the progress made toward the objectives that support CIP Goal 2 as well as the dashboard indicator that connects to the NSSEO Mentor Program. The Mentor Program focuses on building the capacity of our educators through ongoing and job-embedded professional learning to implement innovative teaching practices and create an engaging and rigorous learning environment.

Every licensed staff member is paired with a veteran NSSEO staff member for their first two years in the District. Carefully selected mentor/mentee pairs are established to ensure a positive relationship and a close match in term of job roles and focus areas. The new staff meet monthly to engage, connect and grow. They connect as a Professional Learning Community (PLC) to network, share ideas, learn together and reflect on their instructional practices. The new staff connect with their mentors monthly and complete a log that includes activities and topics for discussion. This year's mentoring program was guided by a book study, *10 Mindframes for Visible Learning: Teaching for Success* by John Hattie and Klaus Zierer. Each mindframe was dissected during the monthly PLC through conversations with peers, their mentors and administrators to identify how to implement the methodologies and strategies in their specific sphere of influence. The overview of CIP Goal 2, student learning environment, concluded with a [video of the NSSEO Mentor Program](#).

### **NSSEO Finance Advisory Committee Update:**

Members of the NSSEO Leadership Team held the second of its Finance Advisory Committee meetings on April 3rd. Assistant Superintendent Julie Jilek provided an update on enrollment projections, staffing projections, and increases/decreases for program tuition rates and costs for other services. The next Finance Advisory Committee is scheduled for April 17th at 4:00 p.m. at the NSSEO Administrative Offices. The proposed NSSEO Budget and district cost projections will be sent to each member district following the Finance Advisory Committee meeting on the 17th.

### **Making a Difference One Partnership at a Time:**

The spring has been filled with legislative events and visits to NSSEO's programs for community partners and state legislators to gain a greater understanding for the services and programming we provide to students with complex needs. Great organizations are driven by their why, motivated daily by their purpose and this was an intentional focus of the second annual NSSEO Legislative Roundtable. The intent of the Roundtable was to allow our students' futures and their life goals to propel us forward to take bolder steps and intensify our efforts in supporting the community and families for post-school life planning. Parent speakers shared their realities and their dreams for their children. Several state legislators engaged in discussion with parents, community agency leaders and district leaders to share their support, brainstorm ideas to tackle current barriers that face young adults and families during the transition into adulthood. Clear action steps were a product of the small roundtable discussions that will guide our action plan to achieve the goal of ensuring the landscape is more rich and supportive for young adults with disabilities.

Local and state legislators, along with NSSEO Governing Board President Krinsky and parents joined several NSSEO leaders on a tour of Kirk and Timber Ridge Schools. This tour offered an opportunity for the stakeholders to learn more about NSSEO through discussion and engaged experiences with students. Legislators and Board Members engaged with students in various aspects of learning, took a school bus tour through Arlington Heights and participated in an interview lesson with students at Timber Ridge. Students

provided handmade gifts to the NSSEO visitors in appreciation for their time and support. The involvement and interest of the participants in both the roundtable and tour provides greater understanding and impact by working together to boldly make change. This important and collaborative focus continues to move the agenda of addressing the areas of funding, program options, employment opportunities and housing challenges to create greater opportunities for a positive influence on fulfilling life planning for students.

### Hersey High School Deaf Academic Bowl Winners!

Hersey took First Place in the National Deaf Academic Bowl on Sunday. Hersey High School came out on top of the 20 teams who traveled from all over the country to compete at Gallaudet University. Many other teams were from large state schools for the deaf, but our intrepid team of three determined students, Sergio Cortes, Winter Ly and Yael Lengua, demonstrated their skill, courage and focus under immense pressure. Congratulations to Sergio, Winter and Yael on their VICTORY!



Great student success is guided by the dedication and support of special staff members. Sincere appreciation extended to Maureen Alvarado, DHH Academic Bowl team coach and interpreter, for her giving spirit and wonderful coaching skills supporting the team to victory. A thank you to the positive support and guidance from Dana Harris who also accompanied the team, supporting them through this incredible accomplishment.

### Kirk Teacher Named WGN Teacher of the Month



Erlind Laci, Kirk School teacher was nominated for Teacher of the Month through a contest at WGN news. Erlind was nominated by Luke Cullen, a Kirk high school student and his mother, Jamie. Erlind received the award and was presented with a check to support his class on Monday, April 15th. Erlind works tirelessly on behalf of his students and emulates the pride and dedication of an incredible staff. Luke's family offered a sincere comment at the award presentation, "I want to thank everyone at Kirk because you are all such amazing people and we

feel very lucky to have Luke at such an incredible school."

### April - Autism Awareness Month:

The NSSEO Governing Board came together to support understanding and acceptance of people with autism [#LightItUpBlue](#). Staff, parents and community continue to influence others through collaborative channels, advancing the work in an important growing area of focus for public education through professional learning, coaching across districts, education and parent networking and trainings.



### Upcoming NSSEO Events:

5/2	6:00 pm	Crosstown Prom
5/19 -	1:00 pm	Walk & Wheel-A-Thon @ Kirk
5/20	TBD	PBIS Student Celebration @ Kirk
5/28 -	7:00 pm	Timber Ridge Graduation
5/29 -	7:00 pm	Kirk High School & Transition Graduation
5/30 -	1:00 pm	Kirk Jr High Graduation
5/30 -	7:00 pm	Miner Graduation
6/8 -	9:30 am	Timber Ridge Golf Outing

### Making a Difference:

NSSEO is actively engaging in efforts to expand partnerships with parents, district and community leaders and legislators to join together as a community committed to deepening understanding and positive impact for NSSEO students and families. To learn more about how to you make a difference visit us at <http://www.nsseo.org/MAKEADIFFERENCE/> as well as on our social media platforms:

Twitter	@NSSEO_org
Facebook	@NSSEO
Instagram	NSSEO_org