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## **Rochester's Bertrand named Illinois Superintendent of the Year**

SPRINGFIELD – Dr. Thomas Bertrand, superintendent of Rochester Community Unit District 3A, has been selected the 2015 Illinois Superintendent of the Year by the Illinois Association of School Administrators (IASA).

The award was presented Sunday (November 23) during the Joint Annual Conference in Chicago co-sponsored by the Illinois Association of School Boards (IASB), the Illinois Association of School Business Officials (IASBO) and the IASA.

“It’s a great feeling to be recognized by your peers. It’s a very humbling experience and in some ways I’m a little uncomfortable because I know how hard many of my colleagues work and the great work they do in their school districts,” said Bertrand, who has been an educator for 28 years, including serving as a teacher, coach, principal and assistant superintendent before becoming superintendent in Rochester in 2002. “I look at this as recognition for our schools and our community. Our board, staff and our teachers are all marching to the same beat.”

Bertrand is only the fifth superintendent in Rochester since 1936, which he says “speaks volumes about the community support for our schools.”

Those who nominated Bertrand noted several major accomplishments in his 13-year tenure as superintendent in Rochester, including:

- Leading Rochester as a pioneer in the “One-to-One” computer world to develop and implement a district-wide digital conversion for students in grades 4 through 12, and completely overhauling the district’s technology infrastructure to ensure Wi-Fi access for all students and staff -- including on school buses to allow students in extracurricular activities to do homework on long bus trips.
- Redesigning the district’s Professional Development program for teachers and administrators to include well-differentiated tracks for professional development.
- Directing the effort to develop a state- and nationally-acclaimed K-12 bullying prevention program.
- Leading Rochester to become the first school district in Illinois to utilize Overgrad, a free web-based tracking system that allows students, parents and staff to objectively measure college and career readiness.
- Facilitating dual-credit classes with Lincoln Land Community College.
- Actively leading the design and development of multi-stage construction projects that combined for a new campus. He has been part of five successful building referendums.
- Leading the feasibility study that propelled Rochester to withdraw from a special education cooperative in order to administer its own special education program, with positive results.

Bertrand said his most important guiding goal has been to develop a culture of “kids first, high expectations and continuous improvement” in the K-12 district of about 2,400 students. Rochester students regularly outperform the state average by a wide margin according to the State Interactive Report Card and also have been high achievers in sports, music and the arts.

In his letter of nomination, Rochester School Board President Randy Hawkins wrote “Dr. Bertrand has successfully transformed what could be termed a ‘small-town’ school into a shining example of success in all facets of public education...and he is a pillar of community involvement.”

Bertrand was raised in Quincy and earned his undergraduate degree from Quincy College, his Master’s from Western Illinois University and his Ph.D. from Illinois State University. He credited his father, Harold, who worked in the Ford Tractor Division for 42 years, and his mother, Marilyn, who worked in a school cafeteria for 25 years, with instilling in him “an appreciation for education and a work ethic.”

“Tom Bertrand is an educator who has dedicated his career to what public education is really about: Kids,” said IASA Executive Director Dr. Brent Clark. “His work as the superintendent in Rochester is a testament to that, and he is most deserving to be named Illinois Superintendent of the Year.”