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Contact: Jason E. Leahy, Executive Director, Illinois Principals Association

Phone: 217-525-1383

Email: [jason@ilprincipals.org](mailto:jason@ilprincipals.org)

**For Immediate Release**

## **Horace Mann and Illinois Principals Association Announce** **2024 Illinois Elementary School Principal of the Year**

Horace Mann and the Illinois Principals Association are pleased to announce that Dr. Bridget Belcastro, principal of Johnsburg Elementary School, Johnsburg IL, has been named the 2024 Illinois Elementary School Principal of the Year. The award recognizes elementary school principals who have demonstrated a positive impact on their students and learning community. Criteria for the award include:

- Demonstrates a positive impact on education and advocacy for children
- Ensures the school climate is positive and reflects high staff and student morale
- Moves actively to implement the goals and objectives of the school
- Works collaboratively with teachers and other staff to improve the educational program and student achievement
- Involves the community in the life of the school and uses community resources for students.

Dr. Belcastro has served as principal of Johnsburg Elementary School for the past 9 years and has served as a school principal for 17 years. Belcastro has been an active member of the Illinois Principals Association during her career in school leadership and currently serves as the Zone V Director for the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP). She previously served as IPA State Membership Chairperson and as IPA Kishwaukee Region State Director and serving on the IPA Board of Directors. She has also served the Kishwaukee Region as Region Director, Treasurer, and Student Leadership Breakfast Chairperson. The IPA Kishwaukee Region includes school leaders from Boone, DeKalb, Kane, McHenry, and Winnebago counties.

"I am deeply committed to the profession of educational leadership because I believe in the transformative power of education," said Dr. Belcastro. "Throughout my career, I have witnessed the profound impact that effective school leadership can have on students, teachers, and the entire school community. Education is not just about imparting knowledge; it's about shaping the future of individuals and society."

Dr. Dan Johnson, Superintendent of Johnsburg School District 12 shared, "(Belcastro's) leadership philosophy is driven by student needs, relationship building, and parental cooperation. With her strong work ethic and passionate focus on her students' success, she has demonstrated her ability to work collaboratively with staff, students, and our families in developing and implementing programs to assist her students to achieve their individual goals."

"Not only does Dr. Belcastro have a strong desire for her students to obtain academic success, but she is also an avid supporter of their social and emotional growth," shared Lindsey Nothagel, parent in Johnsburg School District 12. "Dr. Belcastro has helped foster an environment where students feel safe, cared for, supported and challenged. 'Doc B', as she is affectionately called, has created a positive learning experience for her students by connecting with them during their lunch and recess, maintaining summer reading and play activities for current and incoming students, facilitating fun activities during and after school hours, celebrating student success with award ceremonies, making herself available to parents, and aiding the teachers in the school to create a variety of incredible learning opportunities."

The Elementary School Principal of the Year winner was selected from a pool of region nominees provided by the 21 Regions of the Illinois Principals Association. Dr. Bridget Belcastro will be recognized at the IPA's annual Education Leaders Annual Conference in October 2024.

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The Illinois Principals Association is a leadership organization which serves over 6,500 educational leaders throughout the state of Illinois. You can find out more about the IPA at [www.ilprincipals.org](http://www.ilprincipals.org). Visit <http://www.ilprincipals.org/about-ipa/awards> for more information about the IPA Principal of the Year Awards Program.

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