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## **CROMWELL'S BLAISE MESSINGER NAMED CONNECTICUT'S 2013 TEACHER OF THE YEAR**

(Cromwell, CT) – Blaise Messinger, a Cromwell resident and fifth grade teacher at Cromwell's Woodside Intermediate School for the past six years, was named Connecticut's 2013 Teacher of the Year at a ceremony held at his school this morning. Connecticut Commissioner of Education Stefan Pryor made the announcement at an event that included Mr. Messinger's family, local and state officials, and the Woodside Intermediate School community.

Mr. Messinger was chosen among four finalists, 15 semi-finalists, and over 80 district Teachers of the Year. The rigorous selection process, which includes candidate applications, interviews, and presentations, is conducted by a statewide council comprised of former state Teachers of the Year and representatives from educational organizations, business, and the lay community.

A former actor who began his teaching career in the Los Angeles, California Unified School District in 1998, Mr. Messinger said he was drawn to education after seeing the impact excellent teaching had on his son Ethan, who has autism.

Mr. Messinger believes the key to unlocking the joy and wonder in all students begins with the relationship between the teacher and child, and the environment created in the classroom to nurture that bond. He describes his teaching philosophy as "wanting to be the kind of teacher who gives kids something to say later at the dinner table." He serves as fifth grade representative to the Parent Teacher Organization, organizes weekend family movie outings to see the film versions of books read in class, and attends countless games, recitals, and school events at the request of his students.

"Mr. Messinger has shown a great commitment to his students, going above and beyond to ensure that each student receives the attention they need to excel both in the classroom and in their future aspirations," said Governor Dannel P. Malloy. "He is well respected among parents, students, and his colleagues. It is an honor to acknowledge one of the thousands of teachers in our state who everyday go that extra mile in helping our children receive an exceptional education."

Commissioner Pryor said: "Exemplary teaching is taking place every day in classrooms throughout Connecticut. Today, it is an honor to celebrate the accomplishments of Blaise Messinger, a practitioner who continually seeks to develop his craft, who delivers memorable learning experiences, and who instills a commitment to lifelong learning in his students. Mr. Messinger will be an effective advocate for the profession in the next year, and an excellent representative for Connecticut teachers at the national level."

Mr. Messinger received an undergraduate degree from Brown University and a master's degree from the University of San Diego. He and his wife Kimberley, a paraprofessional who works with special needs children, live in Cromwell with their two sons, Ethan and Caleb.

Connecticut's Teacher of the Year is selected from among approximately 50,000 public school teachers in the state and represents the profession in forums and advisory committees impacting education policy and public awareness of the successes that take place daily in schools, as well as the challenges they face.

As Connecticut's Teacher of the Year, Mr. Messinger will travel to Washington D.C. in the spring to meet with the President and U.S. Secretary of Education. Mr. Messinger also now becomes Connecticut's representative for National Teacher of the Year, which will be announced by the President in June 2013.

Mr. Messinger will succeed 2012 Connecticut Teacher of the Year David Bosso, a social studies teacher at Berlin High School, who concludes his term as Teacher of the Year on December 31.

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