

# PRESS RELEASE

## CONTACT

Kathleen C. Greider, Superintendent of Schools  
(860) 673-8268  
[greiderk@fpsct.org](mailto:greiderk@fpsct.org)

For Immediate Release: June 2, 2020

## **MS. NILDA IRIZARRY IS RECOGNIZED AS THE CAS OUTSTANDING FIRST YEAR PRINCIPAL OF THE YEAR FOR 2020-2021**

Superintendent Kathleen C. Greider and the Farmington Board of Education are proud to announce that Ms. Nilda Irizarry, Principal of Irving A. Robbins (IAR) Middle School, has been recognized by the Connecticut Association of Schools (CAS) as the **2020-2021 William Cieslukowski Outstanding First-Year Principal**.

Ms. Irizarry is an extraordinary school leader who has fostered strong relationships with all constituencies in her first year as Principal of IAR. Her expertise and focus in the areas of teaching, learning, student-engaged assessments and equity have led to collaborative improvement efforts at IAR that have strengthened the school's student-centered approach. As a highly collaborative leader, she has brought many opportunities for student voice and choice to flourish at IAR, creating an environment of innovation and care shared by all members of the IAR school community. Ms. Irizarry, in partnership with faculty and staff, continues to provide increased opportunities for students to participate in student-directed clubs, instructional rounds and student-led projects. This commitment to student voice and purpose-driven learning has advanced improvement efforts at IAR aligned to Farmington's improvement design. She is a highly caring leader. She is leading efforts at IAR and district-wide in the area of equity and inclusivity to ensure all students thrive in an inclusive environment of high expectations and care. Farmington is most fortunate to have Ms. Irizarry leading the IAR school community.

Board Chair Ellen Siuta stated, "As a result of Ms. Irizarry's efforts in her first year as Principal at IAR, in collaboration with her students, faculty, staff and families, she has been pivotal in fostering a sense of belonging to our community for all students and families of Farmington. Nilda is an inspirational and caring leader who is committed to continuing the conversations about equity and inclusion at a time when our schools, town, state and nation need it the most.

Superintendent Greider stated, "Ms. Irizarry is an outstanding leader who is student-centered in all aspects of her collaborative work at IAR. She has not only fostered a culture of caring through her compassionate leadership, but she has also enhanced a culture of innovation at IAR. Her deep belief in the power of student agency and teacher efficacy creates a strong sense of pride and ownership of continuous improvement among all members of the IAR community. Her focus on equity has heightened student voice and choice in the middle grades creating an environment of inclusivity. In turn, our middle school learners are empowered as leaders with a strong sense of empathy for others and a deep understanding of the importance

of making an impact for the greater good. I am very proud and pleased to congratulate and recognize Ms. Irizarry for being named the CAS Outstanding First-Year Principal for 2020-2021.”

FHS Principal and colleague, Dr. Hurwitz cited, “Nilda Irizarry is driven to promote equity with all stakeholders; students, families, and teachers. She lives this shared approach in her daily actions, and it is quite remarkable to see this play out on a daily basis. Ms. Irizarry has consistently demonstrated her initiative, professional collaborative skills, and enthusiasm for working with children. She is a trailblazer in so many ways, and is a champion for student voice and choice. In addition to her impressive leadership, Ms. Irizarry is a “go-to” leader to facilitate professional development learning, and she effectively leads a diverse group of teachers and leaders by co-establishing norms, articulating the mission and vision of the school and district, and by planning carefully and creatively. Ms. Irizarry’s unwavering work ethic, effective communication skills, professionalism, fervent focus on equity, and extraordinary integrity make her a worthy recipient of this prestigious award.”

Ms. Irizarry stated, “I am humbled that I was nominated by my mentor and colleague, Dr. Scott Hurwitz, and members of the IAR school community for the William Cieslukowski Outstanding First-Year Principal Award for 2020-2021. Receiving this recognition means so much, but especially during this an unprecedented school year. Being a First-Year Principal during the COVID-19 pandemic taught me how to lead with patience, humility, and compassion. In times of crisis, leaders set the tone; I tried to uplift, empower, and comfort the school community whenever possible. My district leadership colleagues are exemplary role models and leaders. I have an outstanding district leadership team that is ready to answer any question I may have. While they may be busy, FPS administrators make time to guide me in my decision-making. I have relied on their expertise time and time again. With their support, many of my questions were quickly answered, and IAR students and families benefited from this collaboration. I thank the IAR faculty and staff for their constant encouragement. They have unwavering compassion for the IAR school community, and they collaborate and support each other and me through challenging times. Also, I have an amazing partner and teammate, Mrs. Susan McMahon, who is always on board with any innovative idea, and she makes a deep commitment to all students each school day. Her partnership has helped me be more thoughtful as I think through many difficult scenarios. This recognition is only a reflection of the team that has lifted me. Lastly, I would like to thank Superintendent Grieder, Assistant Superintendent Wynne, and Assistant Superintendent Bowman for their continued push for progress, growth, and excellence in Farmington Public Schools.”

We look forward to celebrating Principal Irizarry at an upcoming Farmington Board of Education meeting.

###