

Life

Port Huron school boss named superintendent of the year

Published: Saturday, October 01, 2016



By **Jim Bloch**
For **The Voice**

Jamie Cain, the superintendent of Port Huron Schools, has been named the Outstanding Superintendent Communicator of the Year by the Michigan School Public Relations Association.

Rebecca Fannon, a community relations specialist with the Grosse Pointe Public School System, recently presented Cain with the award on behalf of MSPRA.

"I'm here tonight because Keely Baribeau applied to the MSPRA annual communications contest," said Fannon, addressing the board at its regular meeting on Sept. 19, as viewed on Vimeo.

Baribeau is Port Huron Schools' public relations specialist.

"She did that not for herself, but on behalf of your superintendent," said Fannon. "She told us that since Jamie Cain was hired by the board of education, he was brought in to be an agent of change and that he worked to develop a team of leaders throughout your community that worked on a message to educate, advocate and innovate."

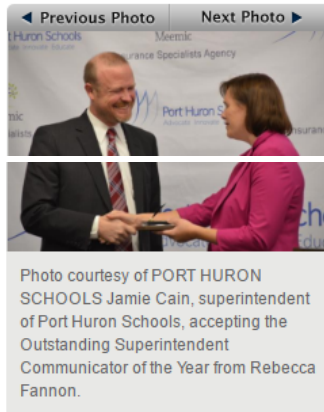
Cain, who served four years as superintendent of Marysville Public Schools, was hired by the district in 2014.

The MSPRA makes the communication award annually. To be considered, a superintendent must oversee a year-round, staffed program of internal and external communications in the district.

"Together with transparency and a collaborative message, you have done some amazing things," said Fannon. "(Keely) told us about all the different methods of communication that your team has used. She told us about your website, your social media, branding, new logos and mascots. She told us about working with the television studio, your weekly e-newsletter, your monthly themed messages not only in newspaper editorials, but in radio interviews. She told us about the recognition each month at these very board meetings that did so much to create sense of community."

Cain's approach recognizes the importance of the message, Fannon argued, but it is relationship-building that gives the message real momentum.

Continued on next page



"(Keely) also told us about the state of the district address that brought together over 100 community leaders, people who then became advocates for your schools. This is so important," said Fannon. "When we celebrate successes like the one we're here for tonight, we tell the world what is right about public education. There is so much good.

"One of the things she didn't even know we'd be celebrating was the passage of your \$105.9 million bond issue, because that hadn't gone through when she wrote this application. But she knew that without the communication, without the transparency, without the developed relationships with the Economic Development Alliance, Blue Water Area Chamber of Commerce, your parents of Port Huron Schools and so many other groups, those things don't happen.

"Our communities will invest in our schools with their time and their talent when we tell them what's right about our schools."

Baribeau closed the application with words that resonated with the MSPRA's judges, said Fannon.

"Whether it's communicating one on one with a student via Twitter or addressing the community on a weekly basis with our e-newsletter, Mr. Cain is a true communication leader with the finesse and skill to celebrate achievements and to deliver difficult truths," wrote Baribeau.

The audience gave Cain a standing ovation.

Cain thanked his family and called his wife Angie "his true partner in this endeavor."

"I want to thank this board of education for taking a chance on me and giving me this great opportunity," said Cain.

Cain thanked his administrative team and especially Baribeau, whom he called "critical to our success."

"I want this award to reflect on our community and on this school district and all the positive things we're doing together," said Cain.

-end-