

## Jamie Castle Named 2021 Pennsylvania Outstanding Biology Teacher

*Mrs. Castle was selected by the National Association of Biology Teachers*

**West Chester, PA — June 30, 2021** — PALCS University Scholars Program science teacher Jamie Castle has been awarded the 2021 Pennsylvania Outstanding Biology Teacher Award, presented by the National Association of Biology Teachers (NABT). “I am delighted and deeply grateful to receive this incredible honor,” shared Mrs. Castle.

Every year, the National Association of Biology Teachers selects an outstanding biology/life science educator in each of the 50 United States, DC, Puerto Rico, Canada, and overseas territories to receive its Outstanding Biology Teacher Award (OBTA). Recipients are honored for outstanding performance in the classroom as well as involvement with the school and community.

Mrs. Castle began teaching in 2005 at the Queens High School of Teaching, Liberal Arts, and Sciences in Bellerose, NY. Her professional history also includes six years spent as a product manager in the medical device industry. A significant portion of her job involved working closely with neurologic and orthopedic surgeons to design new surgical implants and instruments. She also observed the use of those products in the operating room during cerebrovascular and spinal surgeries. Mrs. Castle brings much of what she learned during that time into her Human Anatomy and Physiology classes to help her students apply their knowledge of the structure and function of the human body and to help them picture themselves in careers in health care.

Mrs. Castle joined the Pennsylvania Leadership Charter School in 2014, teaching Academic Biology, College Prep and Honors Human Anatomy and Physiology, and Environmental Science to students enrolled in the virtual high school. She was invited to join the faculty of the University Scholars Program (USP) in 2015. She currently teaches AP Biology, AP Chemistry, and Human Anatomy and Physiology using USP’s university-style blended learning model.

With regard to her teaching philosophy, Mrs. Castle said, “Life science education helps students become informed citizens and critical thinkers. It shows them how they are connected to their fellow humans and to the planet as a whole. It illustrates that nothing occurs in a vacuum and that organism, ecosystem, and global events are intricately connected to molecular events. Likewise, community, regional, and nationwide events are intricately connected to individual choices. I believe these foundational concepts help students embrace the value of both unity and diversity across multiple contexts, from evolutionary theory to human civilization. I work hard to create a classroom culture in which my students can study life science deeply and internalize these transcendent ideas while also attending to the specialized vocabulary, intricate laboratory techniques, and complex details of the college-level biology courses that I teach. I go beyond reinforcing a love of learning in my classroom to encourage curiosity. At the core of this inquisitive and supportive classroom culture is my belief that everyone in the room is an essential part of our shared learning adventure. I know my students must be comfortable with one another and with me in order to engage in the vulnerability required to do difficult work together. This mutual rapport is also necessary for every student to see themselves as a valuable contributor and capable scientist.”

In addition to her teaching role, Mrs. Castle is a member of the USP Admissions Committee, the PALCS Professional Development Planning Committee, and the PALCS Curriculum Committee. She also serves as the USP Instructional Coach, a role that enables her to support her colleagues as they grow their instructional practice, and has advised the USP middle school drama club, the USP high school drama club, and the USP high school a cappella ensemble. She currently advises the USP Biolympiad team and provides individual mentorship to students on science projects, independent research, and national science competitions. Mrs. Castle’s students have presented at the Regeneron International Science and Engineering Fair, participated in the Pennsylvania Governor’s School for the Sciences, and published their independent research in the Columbia University Junior Science Journal.

Outside of PALCS, Mrs. Castle is a member of the National Association of Biology Teachers, the American Association of Chemistry Teachers, and the National Science Teaching Association. She is also a College Board Reader for the Advanced Placement Biology exam each year. During the 2019-2020 school year, Mrs. Castle supported students around the world who suddenly found themselves learning remotely by hosting two live-streamed AP Biology Exam review sessions on YouTube.

Mrs. Castle holds a Bachelor of Science in Human Physiology from Boston University, a Master of Arts in Science Education from Adelphi University, and a Master of Science in Biotechnology from Johns Hopkins University. She is currently working toward a Doctor of Education in Mind, Brain, and Teaching from Johns Hopkins University, with an anticipated completion date of Summer 2024. Her dissertation will focus on the executive function and social-emotional learning needs of students as they transition to taking AP courses.

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#### **About Pennsylvania Leadership Charter School:**

The PA Leadership Charter School's purpose is to provide an academically challenging, knowledge-based curriculum, individually designed for each child's needs. PALCS will combine the benefits of a classical basics oriented education with the latest educational technology and the best teaching and learning education practices. By studying the lives and works of the great leaders in history, PALCS students will develop multi-cultural perspectives and a global awareness. PALCS will prepare students to be informed, responsible citizens with a global mentality who will succeed through mentoring leadership.

#### **About the PALCS University Scholars Program:**

The University Scholars Program embraces the individual scholar. With an understanding of the complexities of high-aptitude learners, both their phenomenal strengths and very real challenges, we believe that these students, like all students, have a right to an appropriate education that helps them to reach their fullest potential. The University Scholars Program creates a setting where like-minded scholars and teachers encourage and inspire.

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