

### **Abraham Michael Haler – New Castle Community Schools**

As the Director of Work-Based Learning at New Castle High School, this individual serves as a vital bridge between the classroom and the local economy. He manages over 70 student internship placements, meticulously matching young people with career-focused roles that align with their personal strengths and professional goals. Beyond placement, he actively seeks out and maintains relationships with community partners, ensuring that students have access to diverse, real-world learning environments.

His leadership extends into the practicalities of workforce preparation, as he personally assists students with resume building, workplace skill development, and FAFSA completion. Recently, his role has expanded to include building-level communications, where he provides updates on sporting events, performances, and club activities, keeping the school community informed and engaged. He is known for his holistic approach to student success, often attending after-school activities to show support for his students' growth and confidence outside the traditional workplace setting.

By aligning educational programming with regional workforce needs, he has helped position the high school as a model for future-focused education. His work ensures that students are not only prepared for college or trade school but are equipped to find meaningful careers within the local community. His passion for student mentorship and his responsiveness to industry leaders make him a powerful asset to the county's economic and educational future.

### **Ethan Hutchinson – New Castle High School**

Ballot wording - This educator has successfully sustained the legacy of one of the state's most formidable show choir programs, ensuring that its reputation for excellence continues to flourish. Under this leadership, the program remains a major source of regional pride and a benchmark for performance standards. By meticulously coordinating high-caliber productions, the director provides a vital platform for students to showcase their talents, effectively bridging the gap between young performers and the wider public.

The commitment to this role extends far beyond the traditional classroom setting. The significant additional effort invested in these productions translates into life-changing experiences for students and professional-grade entertainment for local audiences. This work fosters essential life skills—including discipline, teamwork, and artistic expression—preparing students for success both on and off the stage. The director's professionalism and positive energy have solidified the program's status as a key pillar of the local arts scene.

By maintaining the program's competitive edge and actively sharing student achievements with the community, this educator serves as a champion for music education. This dedication ensures that the region remains connected to its youth through the power of performance, making the director a standout mentor and a significant contributor to the cultural vibrancy of the area.

## **Kaite Cook - Little Sprouts Play Studio - The Sweet Shop**

This local entrepreneur and mother is deeply committed to the long-term vitality of the region, focusing her efforts on initiatives that strengthen both the local economy and the social fabric of the community. Her leadership style effectively blends strategic vision with tangible action, resulting in job creation and the development of meaningful partnerships across various sectors. By prioritizing collaborative events with schools and nonprofits, she ensures that her business ventures serve as a catalyst for broader community support.

Central to her mission is the concept of "reigniting the village"—a dedicated effort to create welcoming, inclusive spaces where families feel seen, supported, and connected. Her work goes beyond traditional business operations to include significant sponsorships and donated services, intentionally reinvesting resources into the families she serves. This focus on building a supportive environment for parents and children alike addresses a critical need for modern social connection and stability.

Through her proactive engagement with local organizations, she has established herself as a cornerstone of community development. Her commitment to fostering environments that encourage family well-being, coupled with her success in forming strategic alliances, makes her a prominent figure in the county's growth. Her work serves as a powerful reminder of how entrepreneurship, when rooted in a genuine heart for service, can fundamentally enhance the sense of belonging and collective strength within a community.