

## State association honors Centennial's Mark Miller

By Gary Weckselblatt Staff Writer | Posted: Tuesday, November 11, 2014 10:30 pm

Mark Miller can get quite passionate when the topic is public education. Tuesday night was one such example.

“It’s fitting that this is Veterans Day,” Miller said during Tuesday’s meeting of the Centennial school board, where he is vice president. “Public education is under attack. There’s a war on public education.”

He specifically took aim at privatization, standardized tests and publicly funded cyber charter schools, saying they are “wrong.”

“The new governor,” he added of Gov.-elect Tom Wolf, “he made some promises. We’re going to hold him to cash them.”

It’s that type of fire and enthusiastic effort in support of public education that earned Miller the Timothy A. Allwein Advocacy Award, which recognizes outstanding leadership in legislative advocacy efforts on behalf of public education and students.

The award was established in 2011 by the Pennsylvania School Boards Association in memory of Allwein, the association’s former assistant executive director for governmental and member relations.

In the audience at Centennial’s meeting Tuesday were PSBA executive director Nathan Mains, who called Miller a “tremendous advocate and champion” of public schools, and the award’s three previous winners, all school board members: Lawrence A. Feinberg, of Haverford, Roberta Marcus, of Parkland, and Tina Viletto, of Cheltenham.

State Sen. Stewart Greenleaf, R-12, Upper Moreland, handed Miller a congratulatory citation from the Senate for Miller’s legislative advocacy on behalf of public education.

“Mark looks like a calm, gentle guy,” Greenleaf said. “Take off that coat and put on a Superman costume and he’s a strong advocate for public education. He definitely deserves the award.”

Miller, vice president of the PSBA, has testified before House Education Committee on topics such as charter/cyber school reform, career and technical education, strike free education, the Keystone Exams and funding. He has been praised for his leadership capacity in various other public education roles, including PSBA Region 11 director, which covers Bucks and Montgomery counties, co-chair of Keystone State Education Coalition, board member of the Network for Public Education, and Federal Relations Network delegate.

Miller, who also celebrated his birthday Tuesday, said that as someone who knew Allwein, “I am truly honored.”

The award was officially given to Miller last month at a ceremony in Harrisburg. He was happy that his parents, Bernard and Mildred, former public school teachers in Philadelphia, “shared the event with me.”

Jane Schrader Lynch, president of the Centennial School Board, put the honor in context, saying “We don’t want Mr. Miller to get a big head.” But there are 501 school districts and 4,500 school board members in Pennsylvania, “so to be one of that large group is quite an honor,” she said.

Also Tuesday night, Keith E. Froggatt Sr., chairman of the Upper Southampton supervisors, thanked the board for having the William Tennent High School band perform at the dedication of the veterans memorial at Veterans Field.

Miller, who attended the event, called it “a very moving ceremony.”