Influential Women Spotlights LeAnn Murphy Cassidy: A Lifelong Educator Dedicated To Empowering Students

MIDDLEBURY, CT, UNITED STATES, September 7, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Combining Instructional Leadership, History Education, Creativity, Mentorship, and a Deep Commitment to Service to Help Students and Educators Discover Their Voices and Reach Their Full Potential



Middlebury, Connecticut — After more than 38 years in education, LeAnn Murphy Cassidy, Ed.S., has built a career around one enduring belief: every student deserves to feel seen, supported, valued, and capable of achieving more than they may initially believe possible.

Throughout her career, LeAnn served as a teacher and teacher leader specializing in middle school history education while also assuming instructional leadership and administrative responsibilities. She remained particularly committed to supporting at-risk learners and students with learning differences, creating classrooms and educational environments that balanced academic rigor with compassion, inclusion, creativity, and personal growth.

Her career reflects a multidimensional approach to education. As a teacher, instructional leader, mentor, former lighting designer and production manager, published author, poet, and advocate for students and educators, LeAnn has consistently drawn upon her varied experiences to create meaningful opportunities for learning and growth.

For LeAnn, education has always extended far beyond the transmission of information. At its best, she believes, education gives young people the confidence to understand themselves,

appreciate perspectives different from their own, develop resilience, and imagine futures that may look very different from their present circumstances.

LeAnn's academic journey reflects both the breadth of her interests and her commitment to lifelong learning. She earned a bachelor's degree in psychology with a concentration in theatre and dance from Trinity College in Hartford, followed by a master's degree in education from Central Connecticut State University. She later earned a Sixth Year Certificate in Administration and Supervision from the University of Bridgeport.

Her professional certifications span a broad range of disciplines, including English/language arts, history, mathematics, science, special education, administration, and theatre. This multidisciplinary foundation has allowed LeAnn to approach education from multiple perspectives, grounded in the understanding that students do not all learn in the same way.

Her early professional experience in the arts also influenced the educator and leader she became. Before dedicating herself fully to education, LeAnn worked as a lighting designer and production manager. Those experiences strengthened her creativity, collaboration, communication, adaptability, and problem-solving skills—qualities that later became valuable assets in both her classroom and leadership roles.

For LeAnn, the connection between education and the arts remains especially meaningful. Creativity offers students another avenue for expression and engagement, particularly for those who may not immediately thrive through traditional academic approaches. Her background taught her that learning becomes more powerful when students are encouraged to make connections across disciplines and discover different ways to communicate what they know.

The People Who Shaped Her
LeAnn attributes much of who she became as an educator and person to the remarkable role models who influenced her throughout her life, particularly her parents.

Both grew up just outside Boston. Her father lost his own father at a young age and became the first person in his family to attend college. Despite humble beginnings and significant challenges, he built a distinguished career while remaining deeply committed to his family, community, and service to others.

Her mother followed a different educational path. She did not have the opportunity to attend college until she was 60, yet she persevered and ultimately completed two degrees—demonstrating through her own example that it is never too late to learn, grow, or pursue a new goal.

Together, LeAnn's parents provided an early model of what it means to use one's time, talents, and abilities in service to others. Their influence, however, extended well beyond professional achievement. They taught her the importance of humility, perspective, humor, perseverance,

and service.

One lesson she carries especially closely is the importance of not taking herself too seriously.

Her father enjoyed a highly respected 36-year career as a finance director, yet professional responsibility never prevented him from embracing life's lighter moments. Whether performing in an annual Kiwanis Club show, participating in community activities, or simply being willing to laugh at himself, he showed LeAnn that professionalism and humor can—and should—coexist.

That lesson remained with her throughout her career. LeAnn has always taken her responsibilities seriously, but she understands that education is ultimately about people. Maintaining perspective, finding joy, and recognizing the humanity of students and colleagues can make challenging work both sustainable and meaningful.

Another pivotal influence was her middle school music teacher, Mike Cassella. He created an environment in which LeAnn felt seen and valued, an experience that profoundly shaped her understanding of the educator's role.

She wanted to become the kind of teacher who could provide that same sense of belonging for others—particularly students who might be struggling socially, academically, or personally. She wanted them to know that there was a place for them in her classroom.

Her early experiences working with young people, including serving as a camp counselor and participating in youth organizations, reinforced that calling. Over time, education became more than a profession. It became an opportunity to give students the same sense of acceptance and possibility that influential adults had once given her.

Making a Difference, One Student at a Time
At the heart of LeAnn's educational philosophy is a simple but powerful idea: making a difference in even one child's life matters.

She recognizes that educators cannot solve every challenge a student faces. They cannot control every circumstance outside the classroom, nor can they guarantee every outcome. What they can do is create an environment where students feel safe enough to learn, supported enough to take risks, and valued enough to believe their contributions matter.

That philosophy has been particularly evident in her work with at-risk students and students with learning differences. Rather than viewing differences as limitations, LeAnn has emphasized identifying individual strengths and creating opportunities for students to demonstrate what they know and what they are capable of achieving.

Her work in history education similarly reflects her commitment to empathy and perspective. She believes history should never be taught simply as a collection of names, dates, and isolated

facts. Instead, it should be explored as the complex story of people with different experiences, motivations, cultures, choices, and perspectives.

Helping students understand multiple viewpoints became an essential part of her classroom philosophy. When students learn to consider perspectives beyond their own, they develop skills that extend well beyond academic achievement. They become better equipped to communicate, collaborate, disagree respectfully, and understand the experiences of others.

For LeAnn, that capacity for empathy is among the most important outcomes education can provide.

The Measures That Matter Most

LeAnn's dedication to education has earned recognition at both the state and national levels. In 2023, she received the VFW National History and Civics Education Teacher of the Year Award at the state level in Connecticut, recognizing her contributions to history and civics education. In 2018, she was honored as Connecticut's Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History Teacher of the Year, reflecting her commitment to bringing American history to life for students. That same year, she was named a finalist for Connecticut Teacher of the Year.

While these distinctions represent meaningful professional milestones, LeAnn has never defined success through awards. Some of the accomplishments she values most have arrived years after students left her classroom.

Former students have reached out through letters and messages to tell her that she saw them, believed in them, challenged them, or made them feel understood during a time when they needed it most. LeAnn has kept those letters as reminders of why she entered education in the first place.

For her, those messages represent a different kind of professional achievement—one that cannot be measured by test scores, evaluations, titles, or formal recognition.

Supporting the Educators Who Support Students

LeAnn's influence has also extended beyond her own students. Throughout her career, she dedicated significant time and energy to mentoring and supporting early-career educators.

She understands that teachers themselves need encouragement, recognition, professional trust, and a sense of belonging. Just as students learn more effectively when they feel valued, educators are better positioned to serve their students when they work within supportive professional communities.

LeAnn believes success in education is inherently collective. The accomplishments she values most are those achieved through collaboration, shared effort, and people working together toward a common goal.

Her leadership style is grounded in appreciation, honesty, and authenticity. She believes colleagues should know where they stand with her and that meaningful professional relationships are built on mutual respect, encouragement, communication, and trust.

Her commitment to professional and civic service is reflected in her involvement with organizations including the American Legion Auxiliary, National Council for the Social Studies, Connecticut Council for the Social Studies, National Network of State Teachers of the Year, Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, Middlebury Historical Society, Middlebury 250 Town National Association of Elementary School Principals, and National Association of Secondary School Principals.

Through these affiliations, as well as her extensive community involvement, LeAnn has continued to contribute to educational, historical, and civic life beyond the walls of her own classroom.

Education in a Changing World
After nearly four decades in education, LeAnn has witnessed significant changes in how students learn and how teachers teach. Technology, social media, changing student habits, and the lasting effects of the COVID-19 pandemic have reshaped classrooms in ways few educators could have anticipated.

Technology has created extraordinary opportunities for communication, research, accessibility, creativity, and learning. At the same time, LeAnn has observed growing challenges related to attention, sustained reading, extended writing, and students' willingness to persist when learning becomes difficult.

The widespread adoption of one-to-one devices during the pandemic was necessary in many circumstances, but it also accelerated an already developing shift toward screen-based learning. As educators continue to examine changes in academic performance and student engagement, LeAnn believes the conversation should focus not on rejecting technology, but on finding a healthier and more purposeful balance.

Students need technological literacy, but they also need the ability to put technology aside and concentrate deeply. They need opportunities to read extended texts, write thoughtfully, wrestle with challenging ideas, experience productive struggle, and work through problems without immediately searching for the easiest solution.

For LeAnn, resilience has therefore become increasingly important.

Today's students navigate complex social environments, highly structured schedules, social media pressures, and rapidly changing cultural expectations. Helping them develop independence, confidence, perseverance, and the ability to navigate disagreement respectfully

has become an essential component of education.

Schools, she believes, have a responsibility not only to develop academic knowledge, but also to help young people build the skills and dispositions they will need to navigate adulthood.

Authenticity, Flexibility, and a Life Without Regrets

Authenticity is one of the values most central to LeAnn's life and career. She believes in being straightforward, genuine, and consistent. Students and colleagues should know where they stand with her, and she has always sought to approach relationships with honesty and respect.

Two additional principles have guided her throughout her career: living with no regrets and remaining flexible. Her lifelong mantra captures the latter with humor: "Blessed are the flexible, for they shall not be bent out of shape."

The ability to adapt has become particularly important as education continues to evolve. Classrooms today look very different from those LeAnn entered nearly four decades ago, and educators must continually respond to changing student needs, technologies, expectations, and circumstances.

For LeAnn, however, flexibility does not mean abandoning one's principles. It means finding new ways to remain true to those principles when circumstances change.

Empathy remains equally important. Through history education, mentorship, leadership, and everyday interactions, she has sought to help people recognize that their own experiences are not the only experiences that matter.

When students can step outside their own perspectives and consider how another person might view the same situation, they develop a deeper and more nuanced understanding of the world around them.

A Message to the Next Generation of Women Educators

For young women considering careers in education, LeAnn offers a meaningful message: choose work that matters.

She believes education is among the most consequential professions because every career and every field ultimately depends on people who were once students. Teachers help shape scientists, nurses, engineers, artists, business leaders, public servants, counselors, educators, and countless other professionals who will shape the future.

The work is not always easy, and educators do not always see the results of their efforts immediately. Sometimes the most meaningful evidence arrives years later, when a former student reaches out to say that a teacher believed in them when they struggled to believe in themselves. Those moments, LeAnn believes, make the challenges worthwhile.

She also encourages young women to recognize that leadership does not require standing above others. Leadership can mean lifting others, recognizing their contributions, mentoring colleagues, sharing credit, and creating opportunities for the people around you to succeed.

A Legacy of Service

The values LeAnn inherited from her parents have become part of her family's broader legacy. She has worked to instill the same commitment to service and contribution in her children, who have pursued careers centered on helping others in fields including nursing, physician assistance, engineering, college counseling, and government service. Their continued involvement in civic life reflects many of the same values that shaped LeAnn's own journey.

For LeAnn, service is not something separate from professional or personal life. It is woven into the way she understands responsibility, community, leadership, and fulfillment.

That philosophy has guided her involvement with students, educators, community organizations, historical societies, youth programs, and civic initiatives throughout her life.

After more than 38 years in education, LeAnn continues to carry the same sense of purpose that first led her into the classroom. Her journey has encompassed teaching, instructional leadership, administration, the arts, writing, mentorship, and community service, but the central mission has remained remarkably consistent: helping people discover their potential and understand that their voices matter.

As a published author and poet, she has expanded that mission into the world of writing. Her first historical fiction book was released in 2025, providing another avenue through which she can bring together storytelling, history, creativity, and the human experience.

Although her formal classroom career has concluded, the work that defined it has not. Through writing, mentorship, historical and civic initiatives, and community involvement, LeAnn continues to find ways to educate, encourage, and connect with others.

Her story demonstrates that a career in education can become much more than a profession; it can become a lifelong commitment to service.

Learn More about LeAnn Murphy Cassidy:

Through her Influential Women profile, https://influentialwomen.com/connect/leann-cassidy

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