

Robert J. Cercone

A life-long resident of Freedom, Robert J. Cercone has earned distinction as a student, an athlete, and as a member of the community. But most significantly, he has been perhaps the most dominant and influential force in Freedom's public education in a career that has spanned almost half a century.

As a Freedom Area High School student in the 1950s, Cercone won acclaim as a record-setting athlete. When he left Freedom for Youngstown State University, he held the WPIAL single game basketball scoring record – 52 points. At YSU, he earned a Bachelor of Science degree in business administration and three varsity letters. Cercone earned his education certification at Geneva College and his masters in education at the University of Pittsburgh. From the beginning of his career, he served the Freedom district in a number of capacities, including business teacher, junior high principal, assistant superintendent, and ultimately superintendent of schools.

It is his work as superintendent for which Cercone is most remembered and celebrated. One of the longest tenured superintendents in the state and the nation, he assumed the post in 1971 and retired in 2002. During those years he spearheaded numerous educational reforms, won countless awards and commendations, and served on boards and committees on local, regional, and state levels. He was a champion of educational labor relations, a promoter of innovative curricular programs, and an early advocate of technological infusion at all grade levels. He encouraged initiatives in special education and school-to-work programs. In all that time, he never lost sight of the students and teachers in the district. He was an active football fan, a patron of the arts, and a leader who believed in and supported his staff.

Cercone lives in Freedom with his wife of forty-six years, Wanda. He has three children and six grandchildren.

