

2017-2018 Opening of School Update
Office of Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment

This report provides an update on the District Development Plan, summer programs, professional learning, and other critical efforts of the Curriculum Office undertaken in support of, or in preparation for the opening of the 2017-18 school year.

District Development Planning

The District Development Plan is reviewed annually based on the district's progress toward achieving the Board of Education Goals. The development of the plan begins with a summary analysis of key findings. This analysis leads to the articulation of district areas of focus and strategic efforts. This guidance defines the parameters for schools and departments to flexibly identify critical action steps that will advance the district goals. Performance indicators provide the metrics by which we measure progress relative to the areas of focus. The plan is implemented and monitored throughout the year and portions of the plan are reported on to the Board of Education. A final analysis is conducted annually by examining our collective district results against the performance indicators. This assessment is then used to shape the next iteration of the development of the plan. A summary of the goals, focus areas and district strategic efforts are listed below.

Goal One: Advance achievement for all students and reduce disparity between and among groups.

District Focus

As a Leadership Team, we will provide focus, direction, and build capacity for best instructional practice as it relates to (i) establishing goals to focus learning; (ii) facilitating meaningful discourse; and (iii) eliciting and using evidence of student thinking.

District Strategic Efforts:

- Leverage our leadership structures to develop common understanding of the tenets of the key instructional strategies named within our district focus; define systemic thru-lines within school and department planning, professional learning, teacher and administrator goal setting, student learning measures, evaluation feedback, and administrator calibration to provide focus, emphasis, and consistent messaging.
- Lead positive and productive curricular and instructional changes that foster deep learning of content and skills; instruction that is focused on learning targets that promote critical thinking & problem solving; that facilitate meaningful student discourse, communication & collaboration; and that connect various forms of representation while inspiring creativity & innovation.

Agenda Item:
VI.A.1.b.

- Enable college and career readiness through a rich and diverse program of study; conduct ongoing and systemic reviews of PK-12 programming to assess the quality, equity, relevance, and vitality of program and course pathways, program structures, policies and procedures.

Goal Two: Nurture the intellectual, physical and emotional well-being of students and create a safe and respectful learning community where all students are held to high expectations.

District Focus:

Create an inclusionary environment and community that fosters equity, character development, cultural awareness, and cultural proficiency.

District Strategic Efforts:

- Create cultures that emphasize high expectations for student conduct, responsible behavior, equity, and respect for others through comprehensive educational programming.
- Increase student access and opportunities for engagement, leadership, and achievement.
- Establish environments that support risk-taking and instructional routines that emphasize the importance of student voice in the classroom and the school.
- Develop and cultivate school-family-community partnerships; ensure clear, timely and responsive lines of communication with students and families.

Goal Three: Attract, retain and develop high quality staff by providing professional development, resources and appropriate learning environments.

District Focus:

Create the conditions that promote collaborative inquiry through shared and distributed leadership.

District Strategic Efforts:

- Develop systemic approaches to support all staff's professional learning around identified instructional practices and cultural competence.
- Develop our leadership capacity for school-based planning related to behavioral supports and fostering environments that engage students as active partners in solutions to individual issues triggering behavioral concerns.
- Build the diversity of our teaching population to more closely match the diversity of our student population.

Indicators of Progress for District Goals

Elements of the District Development Plan will be reported to the Board of Education throughout the year as performance indicator data become available. In 2016-17, the Board of Education adopted a revised set of performance indicators aligned to the new state accountability system. The full listing of indicators for each goal is provided below.

Indicators under Goal One: Advance achievement for all students and reduce disparity between and among groups.

- We will earn Subject Performance Indices for ELA, Math, and Science of 75 points or higher.
- We will earn Academic Growth Indices for ELA, Math, and Science of 75% (APTA) or higher.
- 100% of students will participate in the CT State Assessment Program.
- 95% of our students who enter high school as ninth graders will meet the graduation requirements four years later.
- We will earn a 6-year Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate of 95% or higher.
- 75% of high school students will successfully complete college and career readiness programming (AP, IB, dual enrollment, CTE, workplace experience).
- 75% of high school students will meet benchmark on college and career readiness assessments.
- 60% of high school students will participate in Arts programming.
- 60% of high school students will participate in extracurricular programming.
- 85% of graduating seniors will enroll in a 2 or 4-year postsecondary program in the first year after graduation.
- 95% of grade 2 students will achieve benchmark within Foundational Reading Skills.
- 90% of grade 2 students will achieve benchmark within Foundational Mathematical Skills.
- Individual Education Plans (IEPs) will be aligned with local and state standards and supported with objectives. Students will reach mastery on 85% of their IEP objectives as measured by progress monitoring.
- We will meet or exceed state defined targets on State Performance Plan (SPP) indicators related to achievement for students with disabilities (we will achieve an SIMR rating of 65.0 or higher).

Indicators under Goal Two: Nurture the intellectual, physical and emotional well-being of students and create a safe and respectful learning community where all students are held to high expectations.

- 90% of parents / guardians responding to a survey will indicate that schools communicate effectively, are welcoming, and adequately address the learning needs of their child(ren).
- 90% of parents / guardians and teachers (PK-12) and students in grades 5-12 responding to a survey will indicate that schools are safe and orderly.
- 95% of all parents / guardians of PK-5 students and 95% of parents / guardians of students with academic difficulties in grades 6-12 will confer with their child's teacher.
- 75% of students will meet or exceed the Health Fitness Zone Standard on the CT Physical Fitness Assessment.
- 95% of students will demonstrate satisfactory attendance.
- We will meet or exceed all state defined targets on the State Performance Plan (SPP) indicators related to learning environment for students with disabilities.

Indicators under Goal Three: Attract, retain and develop high quality staff by providing professional development, resources and appropriate learning environments.

- The development of our Curriculum and Staff Improvement (CSI) calendar and content of professional development opportunities for staff will be aligned with the District Development Plan.
- Personnel summaries of recruiting, hiring (including efforts to increase the diversity of our staff), retention, teacher induction and non-tenured teacher reviews.
- 90% of teachers responding to a survey will agree that professional learning experiences in the district reflect effective instructional practices that promote understanding and transfer.

Committee Work

In addition to our primary areas of focus outlined within the District Development Plan, we are engaged in research and study of a variety of topics impacting our schools that will merit separate reports to the Board. These include:

- Re-Thinking School Start Times Committee
- Graduation Requirements Committee
- Dyslexia Working Group
- Young Educators Initiative

Other committees may be commissioned based on Board directives or emergent issues within the educational community.

Summer Programs

Summer Connections – Charter Oak and Smith Elementary

In its tenth year, 100 students in grades 1 through 5 from Charter Oak International Academy and Smith STEM School attended the Summer Connections Program held this summer on the Charter Oak campus. There is no fee to participate in this four week extended school-year program, and transportation is provided to students who live further than one mile. Students received a free, daily, nutritious snack through a grant procured by Nutritional Services. The Summer Connections program focuses on strengthening core literacy and mathematics standards. Small group sizes, high-interest texts, and hands-on materials, as well as consideration of student needs and interests enhance skill development and motivate learners. Parents/guardians, as well as each student's classroom teacher for the 2017-2018 school year, receive a progress report detailing student learning during the Summer Connections Program.

Summer ESOL Program

The Summer ESOL Program, hosted 142 students in Grades 1 through 8. This summer the program was housed at Smith STEM Elementary. The curriculum focuses on West Hartford ESOL objectives and integrates reading, writing, and mathematics instruction. Students are divided into small, grade-level classes based on their English language fluency (beginner, intermediate, advanced). The continued support for this program ensures that students maintain and enhance their literacy and mathematics skills during the summer months. There is no fee to participate, and transportation is provided to students who live further than one mile from the school. Students are provided a nutritious snack each day which is paid for through a grant procured by Nutrition Services. Parents/guardians, the 2017-2018 classroom teacher, and the building ESOL teacher receive a copy of their student's progress report which details language arts and math as well as personal and social development during the program's four weeks of instruction.

HANOC Race through the Summer: Respect, Academics, Computers, Environment

The Hillcrest Area Neighborhood Outreach Center (HANOC) is in its 19th year. Located 105 Hillcrest Avenue, HANOC is a collaborative effort of the Town of West Hartford, West Hartford Housing Authority, West Hartford Board of Education and other community agencies. HANOC helps families with limited economic means to become more financially independent and integrated into the schools and community by coordinating resources to meet their needs. The various programs offered at HANOC are free of charge, and provide families with the opportunity to enhance the quality of their lives through self-determination, responsibility, commitment and collaboration.

The Summer Academic Program runs for four weeks in July and is offered to any child who is entering 1st through 8th grade and lives in the Hillcrest Area Neighborhood. 52 students enrolled in this summer's academic program. This year's theme was team building and much of the program featured small groups collaborating in problem solving activities. The goal of the program is to provides opportunities for continued learning in an effort to maintain and enhance skills that were

acquired throughout the school year. Breakfast and a nutritious mid-morning snack are provided each day. Under the oversight of a director, three certified teachers, and volunteers, curriculum-based activities, aligned with CT Core objectives challenge students to become better readers, writers, mathematicians and "explorers" of learning. Students strived to establish a community of learners, with the message of being compassionate, kind and respectful towards others when working together.

Project SPARK

This summer, West Hartford saw its third season of partnership with the University of Connecticut to bring Project SPARK (Supporting and Promoting Advanced Readiness in Kids) to 44 Wolcott elementary students. Project SPARK is designed to increase participation of underrepresented groups in gifted and talented programs to support achievement in the core subject areas, and to promote the readiness for participation in advanced curriculum and discourse. SPARK promotes student readiness by offering K-2 summer programming, cluster grouping during the school year, and teacher professional development. Funded by a US Department of Education Jarvis grant, the three-week summer program was taught by four Wolcott school teachers and utilizes Project M2, a research based mathematics curriculum developed by UCONN professors. The staff provided ongoing communication through weekly newsletters about the students' daily activities. A culminating activity included parents, inviting their participation in a hands-on workshop in which they visit the classroom and participate in a variety of mathematical games and activities with their children.

AP Boot Camp

Conard's AP Boot Camp program celebrated its sixth year providing students with an orientation to advanced placement course work and the opportunity to collaborate with their peers while exploring content and study skills necessary to be successful. Approximately 100 students engaged in workshops led by 14 teachers and counselors with the majority of students being first-time enrollees in an AP class. Workshops focused on team building activities, time management, critical thinking, reading and writing skills, and preparations for individual AP courses.

Professional Development

Extended Leadership

The Extended Leadership team met for two days in August with a focus on leadership practices to support district strategic efforts. Mr. Moore outlined clear expectations for principals to be active leaders with a narrowed focus on the most critical needs within their respective buildings. The entire administrative team met the following day and was engaged in focused professional learning in direct support of cultural competence and best instructional practices. Team members were tasked to analyze their relevant data and come prepared to address both an area of success and a challenge. Conversations probed the questions relating to the specific leadership practices that either contributed to the success or are planned in response to challenges uncovered. Sharing of practice enabled the group to learn from each other and also provided for common planning and unity of effort.

Leading up to this event, Jared Morin offered training for administrators in data-driven decision making. During two separate half-day sessions Jared supported administrators in their technical skills of organizing and extracting data as well as their analytical skills at deciphering the logical consequences of data trends in response to instructional inputs and professional learning.

New Teacher Orientation

The Office of Human Resources and the Office of Curriculum and Instruction partnered to support the induction of 34 new staff members this summer. Doug Sekorski, an early career mathematics teacher at Conard High School, served as the facilitator of the day's activities. Highlights of the program included a comprehensive introduction to the district philosophy, mission, and goals for curriculum and instruction, a presentation by Luis Ramirez, the 2017-18 WHPS Teacher of the Year, an introduction to Student Support Services, and overviews of the teacher evaluation process, professional development, gifted and talented services, and information technology. Staff were treated to a presentation by a select group of Wolcott Elementary students and a luncheon featuring keynote addresses by West Hartford Mayor, Shari Cantor and greetings by Dave Pauluk, member of the Board of Education.

Convocation

Mr. Dan Zittoun, principal of Hall High School, and student members of the Hall Pops 'n Jazz Ensemble welcomed the district teachers who convened for this annual opening of the school year event. The talented students treated their audience to an exhilarating selection from the musical "Hamilton" featuring a number of amazing vocals and dance. Dr. Gretchen Nelson, Director of Pupil Services, served as emcee, motivating those in attendance with humor and grace throughout introductions of guest speakers. Dr. Cheryl Greenberg, Vice Chairperson of the West Hartford Board of Education, greeted the faculty and staff with a reflective message challenging teachers to be the front line for civility, teachers of truth, and role models for the community and the country. Josie LaForte, senior at Hall High School, captivated the audience with thoughtful insights on the experiences she's had as the daughter of two West Hartford educators. Josie reminded us of our passion for education driven by an internal narrator who moves us to act in support of others. Mr.

Luis Ramirez, 2017-2018 Teacher of the Year shared his reflections as a first generation American student growing up amidst the myriad of challenges that life throws at our students. He dedicated his comments to his ailing mother in a poignant reminder of the need to not only educate but consider the whole child and find balance in our lives. Superintendent Tom Moore provided an inspirational, motivating, and compelling address reinforcing his ongoing vision for the children of West Hartford, our responsibility to clear paths for students and deliver on a promise of bright futures for every child in the WHPS community. Building on words borrowed from both Dr. Martin Luther King and composer Woody Guthrie (as performed by Bruce Springsteen), Mr. Moore inspired teachers to strive for greatness in order to educate and inspire a populace who truly understand the importance of the shared American experience - that this land is our land, all of us.

Mr. Vicinus will be available to answer questions.