

West Hartford Public School District

**Agenda Item:** Opening of School: Overview and Observation

**Meeting Date:** September 5, 2017

**From:** Tom Moore, Superintendent

This summer has brought much angst, consternation, and fear over the state budget. The beginning of the school year, however, has brought hope. It is inspiring to meet with so many professionals who want to make a difference and greet parents who are entrusting us with their children. Mostly however, it is the return of the children, laughter, and excitement that makes our profession so rewarding.

Once again our professionals are committing to provide clear paths for our students in order to ensure the bright futures that they deserve without putting any limits on what they can achieve. Convocation is an opportunity for us to remind ourselves of why we became teachers and what makes our profession not just a job, but a calling. People are depending on us and we are ready to meet that challenge.

Administrators gathered for two days of Professional Development over the summer with Paul Vicinus and all members of the Executive Team, leading discussions on identifying what have been successes in each school and what areas of growth might be. We took deep dives into data to see what trends were developing in order to inform our instruction. We also discussed how we break down student data, develop goals, and focus on our own improvement. Roszena Haskins lead us in a great discussion and examination of what cultural competence means for us and our next steps as we continue our work with the Equity and Diversity Council (EDC).

The first day of school brought great energy to West Hartford. Wolcott Elementary was very excited to be welcoming its new principal, Scott Dunn. He has already become a key thread in the fabric of their community. Amy Schmelder, Aiken's curriculum specialist, is opening the year as Interim Principal filling in for Shannon Mlodzinski, who is on maternity leave. We have also added Melissa Caballero, a veteran of West Hartford as a teacher, to the role of Special Education Department Supervisor. Overall, more than 9,500 students crossed the thresholds of our schools on Wednesday. For the past six weeks, our schools were readied and prepared for our students by committed office staff, maintenance workers, and custodians. Bob Palmer, our Director of Plant and Facilities, oversaw numerous projects to make our buildings better. There were improvements all around but what was most notable as I visited all seventeen school sites on Wednesday, was how happy people were and also just how normal it was. Our children were learning and they slid into their new routines with comfort. It was a pleasure to see so many parents at school openings and it was clear once again, that in West Hartford, education is our priority. We will not let people down. We are committed to making this a great year for ALL students.

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