

Opening of School Update
Office of Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment

This report provides an update on the district planning, summer programs, professional learning, and other critical efforts of the Curriculum Office undertaken in preparation for the opening of the 2018-19 school year and in service to our Board of Education goals.

Board of Education Goals:

- ★ Advance achievement for all students and reduce disparity between and among groups.
- ★ 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.
- ★ Attract, retain and develop high quality staff by providing professional development, resources and appropriate learning environments.

District Focus

Creating a student-centered classroom remains a key area of focus under curriculum, instruction, and assessment. As a district leadership team, we continue to provide focus on building capacity among staff on three best instructional practices: (i) establishing goals to focus learning; (ii) facilitating meaningful discourse; and (iii) eliciting and using evidence of student thinking. Family and community partnerships and engagement are a second area of focus. This work takes meaning in curriculum and instruction through our community partnerships to build authentic learning experiences as well as our ongoing efforts to broaden and refresh our resources to ensure all students' culture and identity are reflected within the learning experience. We have begun to engage our Extended Leadership Team in a review of our practices to ensure systemic equity and to brainstorm innovations to maintain a culture of excellence without exception among our schools. Finally, we continue to examine our behavioral intervention strategies, broadening the number of schools engaged in targeted work with the CPS model. Leadership at every level (classroom, school, district) threads through the fabric of our collective efforts and represents a theme of our district level work to model, share, and grow leadership among all stakeholders.

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 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.

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 listed as an appendix to this report.

Committee Work

In addition to our primary areas of focus outlined above, 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:

- Graduation Requirements Committee
- Dyslexia Workgroup
- Young Educators Initiative
- Elementary Report Card Committee

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 eleventh year, 112 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, rich high-interest texts, and hands-on materials as well as consideration of student needs and interests each year enhance skill development and motivate learners. Parents/guardians, as well as each student's classroom teacher for the 2018-2019 school year, receive a progress report detailing student progress during the Summer Connections Program.

Summer ESOL Program

The Summer ESOL Program hosted 166 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. This year's program included two enhanced features. First, a new partnership with Conard and Hall High Schools brought 15 high school interns to work in classrooms supporting students, assisting teachers, and gaining experience in working with children. The program also changed its nutritional offerings by providing students a more substantial and nutritious snack, costs of which are paid for through a grant procured by Nutrition

Services. There is no fee to participate, and transportation is provided to students who live further than one mile from the school. Parents/guardians, the 2018-2019 classroom teacher, and the building ESOL teacher receive a copy of their student's progress report which details language arts and math progress 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 20th year. Located at 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 program runs for four weeks in July, Monday through Thursday, from 9:00-11:30.

The Summer Academic Program is offered to any child who is entering 1st through 8th grade and lives in the Hillcrest Area Neighborhood. It provides an opportunity for continued learning in an effort to maintain and enhance skills that were acquired throughout the school year. This year, the program serviced 42 students. 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. Each year, a theme is incorporated into the learning activities. This year's theme was "empathy". Students at all levels engaged in read-alouds and literature circles discussing texts whose focus developed students' cultural competency, understanding, and character building. Students heard stories from alternate perspectives and engaged in conversations where the focus was being compassionate and accepting of the differences of others. The hope is that the experience instills an appreciation for the diversity of our schools and community. A mix of fun and learning is incorporated throughout the course of the program.

Project SPARK

This summer, West Hartford saw its fourth and final summer season of partnership with the University of Connecticut to bring Project SPARK (Supporting and Promoting Advanced Readiness in Kids) to 45 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. By nurturing students in grades K-2 through summer programming, enrichment during the school year, and teacher professional development, project SPARK promotes student readiness. Over the past four years, a total of 193 WHPS students participated in project SPARK including 150 from Wolcott and 43 from Whiting Lane. Funded by a 5-year US Department of Education Jarvis grant, the three-week summer program was taught by five 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.

Perseverance through Jewelry Making

Sedgwick teacher Monique Tobet working in collaboration with Donna Cote of HANOC offered a jewelry making class at Hillcrest Learning Center, targeting struggling learners with the intent of teaching perseverance through creative and authentic application of artistic and mathematical skills. Students learned to use a variety of tools, expanded their technical vocabulary, and followed a process from design to production. A very successful program, each of the five students involved finished a copper cuff bracelet, copper pendant, as well as a final piece of jewelry where they learned to wire wrap sea glass. The program was made possible by a grant from Fund for Teachers.

AP Boot Camp

Conard's AP Boot Camp program celebrated its seventh 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 81 students engaged in workshops led by 16 teachers and counselors with the majority of students being first-time enrollees in an AP class. The focus of workshops included team building activities, study sessions on time management, critical thinking, reading and writing skills, and preparations for individual AP courses.

Intercambio (Spanish Exchange Program)

The Intercambio Program offers students and families from West Hartford and Madrid, Spain a unique cultural and linguistic experience through a month long homestay program enriched with travel and educational activities. This summer 26 students from our sister school in Madrid lived with West Hartford families, attended an American culture class offered through the WHPS Summer School program, and took day trips to NYC and Boston. Most of the West Hartford students who participated in the program this year will travel next summer to Spain for a four-week educational and cultural experience. This year the Intercambio program include Spanish teachers Dana Martin at Conard and new-hire Carly Bernheimer at Hall.

Chinese Exchange Opportunities

Chinese Summer Program

The West Hartford Public Schools' collaboration with the Shanghai Foreign Language School continued in the summer of 2018 with eleven students and two Chinese teachers from Hall High School living and studying in Shanghai for two weeks. This intensive program includes courses on Chinese language and highlights nine aspects of Chinese

culture including paper cutting, calligraphy, painting, cartoons, fashion, taichi, an overview of Shanghai, and Chinese holidays and family traditions. The program offered after school activities including visiting old Shanghai, attending a Chinese acrobatic show, shopping in a traditional market, and visiting Shanghai Disney. A two-day homestay offered students an enriched view of Chinese home life and language. During the visit, students took a four-day trip to Chengdu to see the iconic giant panda bears and to hike the beautiful Green City Mountain - Qingchengshan.

Chinese Fall Program

This fall WHPS will be hosting 18 students and two teachers from the Shanghai Foreign Language School in late September. The visitors will spend the first weekend with Hall/Conard host families. SFLS students will shadow classes at Hall/Conard in the mornings. In the afternoons they will take day trips to well-known Connecticut sites including Yale University and the Mark Twain house.

Summer Reading Program

West Hartford Library Media Specialists, along with their department supervisor and townwide elementary curriculum specialist for language arts, collaborated with West Hartford Town Librarians to inspire student participation in the annual summer reading challenge, *Libraries Rock: CT Reads 2018!* The goal for students in grades K-2 was to read at least 10 books and for students in grades 3-5 to read at least 5 books during the summer. Webster Hill School and the Faxon Library invited families to a well-attended Summer Read-Aloud at the end of June to hear favorite books for summer reading and all that our public libraries offer to support students and families.

Student Leadership Programs

All five secondary schools trained students in their upper grades to serve as leaders and mentors to incoming sixth and ninth grade students. At the middle schools, the eighth graders served as leaders in the We All Belong (WEB) program. After two days of training with their teachers, the WEB leaders were placed in charge of a small group of sixth graders during their orientation day. The team-building activities, question and answer sessions, and school tours are designed to make our incoming sixth grade students more comfortable and familiar in their new school. Transition to high school is a major milestone in students' lives and may cause some students anxiety. To ease this transition both West Hartford high schools offer Link CREW programs. Members of the Link CREW are juniors and seniors who have completed extensive training to support incoming ninth grade students in three areas: safety, information, and connection. Link CREW members explain the school supports that are available to help students stay physically, emotionally and psychologically safe. Link CREW members provide key information and insights into school policies and procedures from a student point of view. Finally, the Link CREW team offers new students an immediate connection to their school community and to individual juniors and seniors. The WEB and Link CREW programs took place at each school on August 24 or August 27.

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. Welcoming schools and systemic equity were major themes of critical conversations among leadership. Principals presented elements of their school plans to the Superintendent demonstrating a depth of analysis into school metrics, analysis, and specific action plans driven from these findings. Leaders at all levels were trained in the use of bleed control kits and emergency response protocols. Activities set the foundation for follow up work with teachers and staff at the building level as well as themes which will remain under continuous study throughout the year.

Advanced Placement Teacher Training

Fifteen high school teachers attended Advanced Placement (AP) training at the Taft School this summer. With some of the best instructors in the country, the Taft AP training program familiarizes teachers who are new to teaching an Advanced Placement course with the skills and content to prepare students for AP course work and course examinations. Beyond training in effective teaching and learning strategies, the session offers participants up-to date resources and information on recent trends in their discipline.

Several West Hartford teachers enhanced their skills and understanding of the AP courses and exams by serving as an AP reader in their academic discipline. During these sessions, high school teachers and college faculty work together as table groups to examine and score student work and to share their teaching and learning strategies. This is a unique opportunity for teachers to work directly with college and university staff to examine the skills and knowledge students need to develop for success at their next level of education.

Two very talented AP teachers were selected ahead of their peers nationwide to be presenters at the national AP Conference held in Houston, Texas. Dr. Kathleen Coghill of Hall High School presented on supporting students understanding of statistics within quantitative research. Ms. Jackie Corricelli of Conard High School presented on AP Computer Science Principles for new and experienced teachers. Each of these teachers has become a leader in their subject on a national level.

New Teacher Orientation

The Office of Human Resources and the Office of Curriculum and Instruction partnered to support the induction of over 60 new staff members this summer. Highlights of the program included a comprehensive introduction to the district philosophy, mission, and goals for curriculum and instruction, a presentation by Sonya Stemmer, the 2018-19 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 Aiken Elementary students and a luncheon featuring greetings and a formal address by Carol Blanks, vice-chair of the Board of Education.

Convocation

Mr. Scott Dunn, principal of Wolcott Elementary School, and student members of the Wolcott Wolkatz and Street Beat welcomed the district teachers who convened for this annual opening of the school year event. The talented students under the direction of music teacher Daniel Luongo treated the audience to an engaging and uplifting musical selection which included advice for students in how to deal with parents and teachers. Dr. Roszena Haskins, Director of Continuing Education and Diversity Advancement, served as emcee, motivating those in attendance with humor and grace throughout introductions of guest speakers. Mr. Mark Zydanowicz of the West Hartford Board of Education, greeted the faculty and staff with a reflective message on the success of the district, the foundation laid within our elementary and middle school programs, and the talent and accomplishments of our high school graduates. His perspectives as parent, father, and Board Member added to an emerging theme of family and home. Shyloh Peak, former Wolcott student and rising 6th grader at Bristow Middle School, captivated the audience with thoughtful insights on the experiences she's had as an energetic and outspoken student who arrives, "loud, energetic, and ready to learn!". Shyloh reminds us of the importance of taking time to connect with students on a personal level and leverage all of the energy, skill, and passion that they bring to their own education. Mr. Sonya Stemmer, 2018-2019 Teacher of the Year shared her reflections "teaching is an exercise in hope." Sonya spoke of the importance and value of taking time - really two minutes - to genuinely connect with students, learn from them, gauge their fears, their strengths, and their dreams, and deliver not just an education, but hope for every future success and the promise of a bright future.

Superintendent Tom Moore provided an inspirational address reinforcing his ongoing vision for the children of West Hartford and our responsibility to clear paths for students. He expressed his sincere gratitude for the quality of education provided to his two children enrolled in our schools and reflected on the amazing opportunities available to his elder child Jack who graduated this past spring. Tom stressed the importance of welcoming all parents and developing deep and meaningful partnerships with families that allow us to have meaningful conversations about how to continue to grow and improve. Finally, he stressed the concept of having faith in every student's potential and to never place limits on any child by giving in to a lowered expectation or giving up in the face of obstacles or frustration. He charged all teachers with being the best version of themselves and to treat every day as a new opportunity.

Our keynote, Medal of Honor recipient, CPT Paul "Buddy" Bucha inspired the audience with a heartfelt message touching on leadership, honor, and humanity. CPT Bucha outlined his framework for leadership consisting of five elements: integrity, confidence, competence, compassion, and humility. Bucha drew parallels to many of the themes shared throughout the morning to include the importance of listening, relationships, and a belief in the value of every individual.

Mr. Vicinus will be available to answer questions.

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.