

West Hartford Public School District

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

**Meeting Date:** September 4, 2018

**From:** Tom Moore, Superintendent

Summer is a time for our teachers and students to refresh, relax and reflect. It is not a time when learning and growth becomes stagnant, however. West Hartford provides not just vibrant school offerings, but excellent camps at our many parks, staffed frequently by older high school students or recent graduates who serve as wonderful role models. Our teachers have opportunities not just to recharge and relax with families, but to read, travel and reflect on their practice in their previous years. I know by August, people are ready to reengage in the lifeblood of our community, the West Hartford Public Schools.

While the school year got off to a hot start, I was so encouraged on day one to see the excitement students and staff brought to our opening. Whether it was kindergartners proudly carrying their backpack into school following their new teacher, or seniors taking pictures in “class of 2019” tee shirts, our kids were clearly ready to start up again. Some parents might have been shedding tears in both situations, but I promise them that their children are in good hands.

Our administrators worked during this summer to prepare for a great year. We were fortunate to have stability in leadership, as our Executive Team and roster of principals had no changes. This allowed us to engage in some rich professional development to kick off the 2018-2019 school year, as principals analyzed their own data, and presented, to colleagues, the challenges that will be a focus in their buildings this year. We also looked at areas where biases can set up institutional roadblocks in our system, and worked on plans to ensure that our schools are welcoming to all of our families.

Convocation is the official kick off to the new year and this year was highlighted by CPT Paul “Buddy” Bucha discussing leadership with our staff, and urging our teachers to be the leaders they can be. Teachers then returned to their buildings to be led by principals and administrators to focus on their own building efforts to ensure clear paths, bright futures, and no limits for our students.

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