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# CONNECTIONS

With the West Hartford Public Schools  
*Clear Paths. Bright Futures. No Limits.*



## CONNECTIONS

With the West Hartford Public Schools  
*Connections is a districtwide publication presented to you by the Office of the Superintendent, West Hartford Public Schools, 50 South Main St., West Hartford, Connecticut 06107*

### The Charter Oak School Project Progresses as a Steel Skeleton Takes Shape

The Charter Oak International Academy construction project moved briskly along during the summer months. All the foundations have been poured, and by the end of August, the steel skeleton will be substantially complete.

The building is projected to be complete by next summer, with a scheduled opening of August 2016. Follow the progress of the building by viewing the construction site cam at <http://charteroak.whps.org/>

By this coming fall, the building envelope will be finished; walls will be erected and roofing laid. Then during 2016, the interior of the building will be completed. The teachers will move out of the old building at the end of the 2015-16 school year, and the old Charter Oak building will be torn down.

The project's final touches will be the completion of the parking lot and parent dropoff on the western edge of the site in the fall of 2016.



#### Distribution Of **Connections**

An on-line version of **Connections** With the West Hartford Public Schools is now available at <http://www.whps.org/connections.pdf>. If you do not wish to have a copy of **Connections** mailed to your home, please email [connectionsout@whps.org](mailto:connectionsout@whps.org) with your name, address, child's name and school. Thank you.

### Welcome Back!

A new beginning. A fresh start. A triumphant return. I wonder if these phrases describe how you or your child is looking at the start of this school year? I hope and expect that this will be a great year for your family, one that validates your decision to live in West Hartford. Along with the excitement though, it is also natural that other thoughts might cause anxiety.

Where do I sit at lunch? What if this class is too hard? How do I find my bus? These are questions going through the minds of many students as the new year begins. Nerves, apprehension and tension are a natural part of a new school year for both parents and children. It is important to talk about these concerns and to ask questions so that we can understand and perhaps assuage your fears. This starts with open and honest communication between families and schools. Reach out to your child's teacher. They want to get to know as much about every student that they teach as possible. I believe with all my heart that positive relationships between home and the classroom are an important factor in a great education. Don't be shy. We want to be your partner.

**"We are right to be proud of our school system and to constantly seek ways to be even better for our children and our community."**

I feel so fortunate to be the superintendent of West Hartford Public Schools. When people ask me what my favorite part of the job is, I reflect on the optimism of West Hartford. Some might think that parents here are too demanding, but I love that you believe that we can be the best! I am inspired by the hope that I have for the success of all of our children and for the great things that they will bring to our country in the future. We are right to be proud of our school system and to constantly seek ways to be even better for our children and our community.

As the new year begins, I can offer you a few guarantees. First, your child at some point will have a bad day. It happens. How they learn to react to these bad days is an extremely important lesson for the future as they prove to themselves that they have what it takes to overcome struggle. Secondly, whether your child is a four year old, or a senior in high school, you will worry about how well they are making friends, and who their new friends are. No matter what, keep talking to your child about this and get to know their friends. If you have concerns, talk to a teacher or to a school counselor. I promise that I will do all I can, every day, to ensure that everyone who works for the West Hartford Public Schools will fight every day to clear paths, create bright futures, and refuse to put any limits on the possibilities of any child. Great things are ahead of us!

Tom Moore



1st Issue

15-16

#### A Look Inside:

- *New Administrators*
- *Understanding the New State Assessments*
- *Teacher of the Year*
- *An Update on the Charter Oak Project*
- *Recent Retirees*

## New Administrators Enhance a Quality Leadership Team

Six new administrators joined the West Hartford Public Schools Leadership Team this spring and summer. Our new administrators have the leadership qualities inherent throughout the current Leadership Team. These new leaders understand the West Hartford Public Schools Mission and will inspire a shared vision throughout each of their respective schools and departments.



Jim Quinn  
Principal  
Aiken

**Jim Quinn** is the new principal of Aiken Elementary School. A resident of West Hartford and graduate of Conard High School, Jim earned his bachelor's degree from the University of Connecticut, his master's from the University of Hartford and his certification in Educational Leadership from Central Connecticut State University. He has spent the past three years as principal of South End Elementary School in Southington, was principal of Thomas Hooker Elementary School in Meriden and served as assistant principal in Southington. Jim began his career as a teacher in East Hartford.



Teresa Giolito  
Principal  
Smith STEM

**Teresa Giolito** is the new principal of Smith STEM. Teresa taught grade four and World Language at Smith STEM from 2001 to 2010 before moving to Duffy Elementary School where she served as curriculum specialist through October 2012. For the past three years she has been an assistant principal at West Woods Upper Elementary School in Farmington. She completed her bachelor's degree in Elementary Education at Central Connecticut State University, her master's degree at CCSU and her 6th year in Educational Leadership at CCSU.



Melissa Behrens  
Asst. Principal  
Sedgwick Middle

**Melissa Behrens** has been named assistant principal of Sedgwick Middle School. Melissa has been the science teacher at Smith STEM School since 2004. She served as interim curriculum specialist at Bugbee this past fall and is a member of our Leadership Academy's fourth cohort. Melissa has a bachelor's degree in English from Trinity College, a master's from the University

of Saint Joseph and a Sixth Year in Educational Leadership from Sacred Heart University.

**Dr. Kris Nystrom** has been appointed department supervisor for English/Language Arts. Kris is currently the English Department chair and a teacher at Coginchaug Regional High School. He began his teaching career as an English teacher at New Britain High School. Kris completed his bachelor's degree in English from Salisbury University, his master's in Liberal Studies from Wesleyan University and his Ed.D in Educational Leadership from CCSU.



Dr. Kris Nystrom  
Dept. Supervisor  
English/Hall

**Dr. Marie Davis** is our new department supervisor for Pupil Services. Marie was a special education supervisor for Suffield Public Schools, a director for the Oak Hill School in Hartford and began her teaching career in Torrington as a special education teacher. She has her bachelor's degree in Special Education from the University of Saint Joseph, and her master's and Ed.D in Educational Leadership from the University of Hartford.



Dr. Marie Davis  
Dept. Supervisor  
Pupil Services

**Lisa Daly** has been appointed department supervisor for Physical Education and Health. Lisa has spent the past three years as administrator for the Carol M. White Physical Education Program Grant working with the Plymouth Public Schools and the state Department of Education. She began her teaching career in Simsbury. She has her bachelor's degree in Physical Education from Keene State University, her master's from the University of Saint Joseph and her Sixth Year in Administration and Supervision from Sacred Heart University.



Lisa Daly  
Dept. Supervisor  
Physical Education

## Congratulations to Recent Retirees

Being a part of a high-performing school district that values great teachers and supports achievement for all children is highly motivating and rewarding. This year we had 23 teachers, administrators and staff members retire from West Hartford Public Schools, many with more than 35 years in West Hartford. These committed and dedicated professionals will be missed:

Kathy McKay, Principal, Aiken Elementary School  
Claire Kusmak, Teacher, Hall High School  
Bert Neumaier, World Language Department Supervisor  
Deta Reid, Teacher, Morley Elementary School  
Steve Potter, Teacher, Conard High School  
Linda Roberts, Teacher, Bristow Middle School  
Virginia Connors, Teacher, Sedgwick Middle School

Linda Beyer, Teacher, Wolcott Elementary School  
Elizabeth Devine, Teacher, Hall High School  
Mary Sheridan, Teacher, Norfeldt Elementary School  
Tony Wilusz, Teacher, Morley Elementary School  
Lori Willin, Teacher, Morley Elementary School  
Charles Daly, Teacher, Conard High School  
Jerry Cogan, Teacher, Hall High School

Catherine Buchholz, Department Supervisor for English/Language Arts  
Nancy Eastlake, QUEST Curriculum Specialist  
June DeGray, Teacher, Conard High School  
Ellen Nichols, Teacher, Bristow Middle School  
Tracey Wilson, Teacher, Conard High School

## Understanding the New State Assessments

This fall, the district will receive the initial results on our new state assessments delivered last spring to all third through eighth and 11th graders. The assessments measured student progress toward grade-level and college readiness standards in literacy, mathematics, and for select grades, science.

Mathematics and literacy assessments were computer adaptive and delivered on-line in an untimed setting for all students. The legacy science assessments were delivered primarily through paper and pencil and conformed to set time allotments.

The State Department of Education is expected to deliver individual score reports to districts in early September, and one-two weeks afterward, the reports will be mailed to parents.

There are some important differences in the new format of the score reports. Because the number of questions on the new assessments is far fewer than the historical CMT assessments, reporting is far less granular, providing a summary of individual student performance on larger instructional targets within the content area.

In literacy, score reports will provide a student's overall achievement level and

performance information across four areas of knowledge and skills: reading, writing, listening, and research/inquiry.

In mathematics, score reports provide overall achievement scores and level, along with performance information across three areas of knowledge and skills: concepts and procedures, problem solving and data analysis, and communicating reasoning.

Reports also provide the school and district averages for the broad categories of literacy and mathematics. Beginning next year, with the benefit of two years of data, reports should include a vertical growth scale, demonstrating a student's relative growth over time.

Please note that marked differences exist in the achievement levels and interpretation of scores for mathematics and literacy (no change to science). The state has shifted from five performance categories to four and adjusted the metrics associated with categories to more closely align with the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) testing program.

## Teacher Of The Year

**Jennifer Lanese** has been selected to represent West Hartford Public Schools as the 2015-16 Teacher of the Year.

Jennifer has been an English teacher at Hall High School since 2001. She received her bachelor's degree in Secondary Education, English from the University of Connecticut, and her master's degree in Secondary Education, English, also from UConn. Jennifer is a committed TEAM mentor, assisting student teachers and new teachers, and is an active member of several school-and-district wide committees including Student/Faculty, Scholarship Evaluation, Safe School Climate, and LGBTQ.

The Teacher of the Year process is rigorous and begins with nominations from other teachers. Nominees then submit a resume, essay and recommendations. Finalists have a lesson videotaped; the Teacher of the Year committee formally interviews the final three and makes a decision. Sincere congratulations to Jennifer on this accomplishment!

