

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
Phone (860)561-6651

Mentor Program

Continued from page 3

now can only return positive dividends to their futures and our communities.”

During January, National Mentoring Month, the Mentor Program invited mentors, mentees, advocates and their respective families to attend Make Merry on Mentor Pride Day, the first ice cream and karaoke social honoring mentors. Sponsored by A. C. Petersen Farms and The Kids Place, the fun-filled event was a way for everyone to get together in a relaxed setting. Also, during January, A.C. Petersen Farms offered a free scoop of ice cream with the purchase of a meal to mentors, mentees, advocates and their respective families in appreciation of their commitment. Catherine Denton from A.C. Petersen Farms and Vickie Culligan, director of the The Kids Place, helped to make January a successful month for the Mentor Program.

Carol Wilkas, Mentor Program District Coordinator, commented: “We appreciate the commitment and dedication to our school community, and we thank the PTC, the Prospect Café, and A.C. Petersen Farms for their decision to champion our mentoring efforts. Help us tap recruits and increase our number of mentor/mentee relationships.” To learn more, contact Carol Wilkas at 860-231-6009.

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 with your name, address, child's name and school. Thank you.

Connections is printed on 100% recycled paper.

Upcoming Events

Hall, Play: “The Cripple of Inishmaan”

Hall Black Box Theatre
February 23, 24, 25 & 26 at 7:00 PM
For tickets and information, call 232-4561, voice mail 1066
Free Performance for senior citizens: February 23 at 2:00 PM

Solisti, Chocolate Café

February 26 at 2:00 PM & 7:00 PM
Town Hall Auditorium
\$15.00 table seating/\$10.00 balcony seating
For more information and tickets, call 231-6038

ArtBeat

Townwide Student Art Exhibition
West Hartford Art League
Clubhouse Gallery on Buena Vista Road
March 9 - April 3
No charge
Opening Reception, March 9, 4:00-6:30 PM
For information, call 561-6638

Conard: Musical “Footloose”

March 18 & 19 at 7:00 PM
March 19 & 20 at 2:00 PM
Conard High School Auditorium
For more information and tickets, visit www.conardmusical.org
Free Performance for senior citizens: March 16 at 2:00 PM

Hall, Pops ‘n Jazz

March 18, 19 at 7:30 PM
March 24, 25, 26 at 7:30 PM
Hall High School Auditorium
For tickets and information, call 232-4561, ext. 1856
Free Performance for Senior Citizens: March 23 at 2:00 PM

Conard/Hall, String Festival

April 13 at 7:00 PM
Conard High School
For information, call 231-6038

Middle School Festival of Music

The Belding Theater, Bushnell Center for the Performing Arts
April 7 at 7:30 PM
For more information, call 561-6638

Hall, Play: “Romeo and Juliet”

Hall Black Box Theatre
April 28, 29, and 30 at 7:00 PM
For tickets and information, call 232-4561, voice mail 1066
Free Performance for senior citizens: April 27 at 2:00 PM

Inter-Elementary School Festival of Music

May 19 at 7:30 PM
The Bushnell Center for the Performing Arts, Mortensen Hall
For more information or tickets, call 561-6638

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Hanban-Asia Society Confucius Classrooms Network

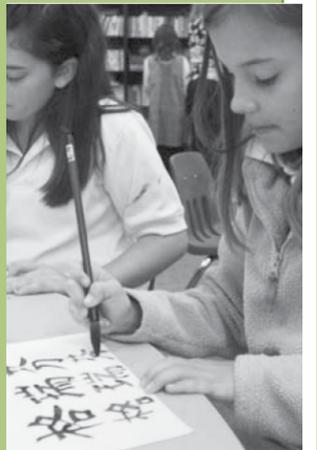
West Hartford Public Schools has been accepted as a member of the second cohort of schools in the Hanban-Asia Society Confucius Classrooms Network, a national network of 100 exemplary Chinese language programs. The Network, which will be developed over three years, recognized West Hartford's potential as a model Chinese language program for the U.S., its strong local leadership, its demonstrated commitment to international exchange and collaboration and its global vision for the future. With this second cohort, the Network represents over 15,000 students in 23 states and the District of Columbia from all types of schools - urban, rural, and suburban.

孔子学院 CONFUCIUS INSTITUTE

Each Hanban-Asia Society Confucius Classroom will be matched with a partner school in China to enhance opportunities for language learning and to provide students, teachers, and administrators with opportunities to conduct exchanges and joint projects. The Network is linked through an online community where teachers will share resources and best practices in an effort to build models for the field. To help American students become more globally competent, Asia Society has been supporting the development of Chinese language programs in schools across the U. S. Their work includes: the Chinese Language Initiatives e-newsletter, an annual National Chinese Language Conference co-organized with the College Board and the development of resources such as the “Learning Chinese in American Schools” DVD and the “Meeting the challenge” report on Chinese language teacher preparation.

The Confucius Classrooms Network has been established with the support of an International Expert Advisory Committee and in partnership with Hanban, the affiliate of the Chinese Ministry of Education that supports the teaching and learning of the Chinese language and culture in all corners of the world. Beyond recognizing excellence in Chinese language teaching, the Network is the beginning of an ongoing process of field building with the goal of establishing high quality, sustainable Chinese language programs in all regions of the U.S. It is an important step toward strengthening American understanding of China.

After designing the selection process for the 100 U.S. schools, the Asia Society assists them in creating linkages with schools in China, convenes an annual meeting in conjunction with the National Chinese Language Conference, provides support through e-newsletters and professional development seminars and collects data to assess progress. For more information, go to Asiasociety.org/Chinese.



Mission To inspire and prepare all students to realize their potential and enhance our global community

A Look Inside:

- Physical Education Strategies
- Budget Preview
- Celebrating Diversity
- Mentoring Partners
- Bullying: Q & A



Physical Education Strategies – Students Learning Together



Physical Education Strategies is an upper class elective course where regular education and special education students are teamed together. Physical Education teachers Frank Robinson (Hall) and Kerrie Massaro (Conard) collaborate with the classroom teachers and paraprofessionals to design and implement a variety of games, sports and cooperative activities that not only improve physical skills, but also more importantly develop relationships between high school peers. They design all activities to build



peer relationships through positive feedback while recognizing the strengths of each individual. With that in mind, at times skill practice is tailored to the individual physical needs of the students, such as visual tracking or strengthening of muscles. Upper class students taking this course are recommended by their previous physical education teachers and have successfully completed health education and earlier physical education classes. Since these students will become role models for the special needs students, it is essential that they have demonstrated

basic physical skills and a sense of responsibility.

In a typical class you might see a student sitting in a specially designed chair pushing six inches across the floor, or hear words of encouragement and clapping as a team of four successfully dribble and pass the basketball from one end of the court to the other and then shoot for the hoop! Then there's the student with a huge smile on her face as her "gym buddy" dashes across the gymnasium floor to shout hello and slap a high five! Friendships do not end when the



physical education class is over. Some students get involved in other related activities such as Unified Theatre or Unified Sports; others find a break in their daily schedules to stop in the classroom to see their gym buddies or check with them during lunch. Once they have left Hall or Conard, students frequently show up during college breaks to say hi and reconnect. PE Strategies breaks down barriers and opens doors that last far beyond the 45 minutes twice a week in physical education class.



"This course should be mandatory for every student."

"It's lots of fun - some real male bonding between me and my buddy."

"Nice to see them smile; it makes me feel good inside."

"Maybe some students can't talk, maybe they're not super-skilled athletes, but they enjoy playing and being a part of a team."

IMAGINE the Possibilities



New Partners Champion Mentor Program

The Parent-Teacher Council (PTC), the Prospect Café and A.C. Petersen Farms have adopted the West Hartford Public Schools Mentor Program to link students with caring adults and to help develop their skills and relationships. Since the PTC includes representatives from all of the schools, the administration, principals, and the superintendent's office, co-presidents, Angela Martin and Lisa Swayne, recognize that their organization can help increase the Mentor Program's reach by involving the Council more directly with the schools. The Council has provided the Mentor Program with a new banner - Create a Future. Be a Mentor. That message is intended to build awareness and draw strong candidates into the West Hartford Public Schools Mentor Program. The PTC also connects personally with parents about youth mentoring through a district-wide mentor forum, as well as school-based PTO meetings.

The Mentor Program kicked off the school year with the district's first recruitment social at the Prospect Café. Mentors and advocates brought recruits to socialize with some of the best role models in town. Nick Faenza and the staff at Prospect Café ensured that the first recruitment social would be a success and would help build camaraderie. Mr. Faenza noted: "It is important to reach out to the community to recruit candidates and give students the opportunity to have additional adult role models in their lives. Investing in these students now

(Continued on back page)

"The Mentor Program is a great resource to help students stay connected, do well in school, and guide them on their journey to success."

*Carol Wilkas,
Mentor Program District
Coordinator*



"A. C. Petersen Farms is an integral part of the West Hartford neighborhood, and we enthusiastically support our local schools whenever possible. We believe that it does take a village to help better a child's chance for success and happiness."

*Catherine Denton,
Proprietor of
A.C. Petersens Farms*

2011-12 Budget Preview

We have been aggressive in previous budget cycles to provide efficiency and value to the community: students, staff, parents and taxpayers. Even as our relative spending has gone down, our test scores and the achievements of our students are the highest they have ever been. In preparing for what promises to be a very tough budget year, it is important to put the budget in an historical context.

- West Hartford currently ranks 113th out of 169 towns (2009-10), down from 79th 5 years ago, 60th 10 years ago, 25th 20 years ago and 2nd 30 years ago.
- Our budget is \$11.4 million lower than what it could be if we spent at the statewide average per pupil expenditure
- In the last 4 budgets we have reduced 15 teaching positions, 1.5 administrative positions and another 60 positions (full and part time) that have resulted in ongoing annual expenditure reductions of \$4.2 million
- We are spending 24% less this year than in 2006-07 on items outside of salaries, benefits, transportation, utilities and tuition

Looking forward to the 2011-12 budget, we have two tough hurdles facing us.

1. We currently have \$3.36 million in teacher salaries funded through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) grants. Those ARRA grants expire, and those expenses will come back to the general fund in 2011-2012.
2. We have limited control over medical expenses, which continue to climb. In 1990-91 we paid \$5 million in health claims, and we paid the same a decade later (2000-01). However, those claims have skyrocketed, and for 2011-12 we are projecting almost \$24 million in claims.

To help us in these difficult budget times, the teachers and Board of Education recently reached an agreement that will freeze teachers' salaries for the 2011-12 budget year. Teachers will make the same in 2011-12 as they did in 2010-11. We are very grateful and thank the teachers for their assistance in this difficult budget year. In previous years other unions, administrators, maintenance and non-organized, have frozen their salaries. We continue to bargain with our other unions and expect each union to accept a hard freeze in one budget year. As we put the final touches on the 2011-12 budget, we will work hard to maintain the programs and services the citizens of West Hartford have come to expect and value in a high quality school system, while crafting the lowest budget increase possible.

"Hello! West Hartford" Celebrates Diversity

West Hartford Community Connections has started a town-wide initiative called "Hello! West Hartford." The group believes that it's a way of saying that our community welcomes all residents who represent the 67 languages spoken here. "Hello" and "Welcome" will be presented in a new language each month.

Cześć Hello! ¡Hola! nǐ hǎo Chào anh

"Hello! West Hartford" will involve the schools, beginning with Charter Oak (Spanish for the month of February), and local businesses throughout the year. Mayor Scott Slifka introduced the initiative at the Martin Luther King celebration on January 17, and representatives of "Community Connections" will appear on his weekly program on channel 5 in the coming weeks. "Be the Media", a West Hartford community/school news program, will follow "Hello! West Hartford" from the Charter Oak inaugural activities in February through its roll out to other languages and schools over the coming months. The website for this initiative, www.hellowesthartford.org, will be active beginning Feb. 15. For more information, contact Bepsie Perry at: bpsie@gmail.com. To learn more about West Hartford Community Connections, go to: <https://sites.google.com/site/communityconnectionswh/>.

Frequently Asked Questions About Bullying

The West Hartford Public Schools are committed to providing a safe, orderly, and welcoming environment for all students. We want to work proactively with parents to ensure that our schools remain safe. Last year we were recognized by the State of Connecticut in its report on bullying prevention for some of our excellent work. To ensure that parents know what to do about bullying and how they can help, here are some answers to frequently asked questions:

Q: What is the difference between bullying and teasing?

Connecticut state law defines bullying as: "any overt acts by a student or a group of students directed against another student with the intent to ridicule, harass, humiliate or intimidate the other student while on school grounds, at a school-sponsored activity or on a school bus, which acts are committed more than once against any student during the school year. Such policies may include provisions addressing bullying outside of the school setting if it has a direct and negative impact on a student's academic performance or safety in school." Teasing could certainly qualify; in some cases, the difference is in the intent to harm and in the frequency.

Q: Is bullying just a part of life?

Children need to learn strategies to deal with conflict; children deserve to be treated well.

Being mean to others and making people feel threatened or bad about themselves is never OK.

Q: How do I talk to my children about bullying? Open communication about what is happening at school and with friends is an important part of bullying prevention. Parents assume that their children will tell them if they are being bullied, but parents may need to ask. Remind your children that bullying is not their fault; you will handle it together. Don't solve the problem for them. Listen and talk to them about what the next steps should be, and whom it should be reported to.

Q: What do I do if my child has been bullied? School staff needs to know about the bullying. Report the incident, in writing, to your child's teacher or principal. Include what happened, when it happened, who did the bullying, and the names of any witnesses. School administrators

will follow up with an investigation and a meeting to ensure that your child is safe. Though parents may want to know what happens to the bully, privacy rights preclude us from giving out disciplinary information.

Q: What if one of my children is a bully?

Do not make excuses. Talk to him/her about how wrong the behavior is. Let school personnel help. Bullying can lead to expulsion. We all need to teach our children to stand up to bullying. That can mean telling the bully to stop; it can also mean offering friendship and kind words to the victim. Bullies often want an audience. If they do not get the approval of their peers, the behavior will often stop. Encourage your children to tell a teacher or school principal about bullying incidents. We must keep their physical and emotional safety at the forefront of our efforts.