

# 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

### King Philip Middle School Announces New Assistant Principal

It is with great enthusiasm that we inform you of the appointment of Justin Gusy as the assistant principal of King Philip Middle School. Justin comes to us from West Bristol School in Bristol, Conn., where he served as assistant principal and previously served as assistant principal and K-12 coordinator of Humanities for Vernon Public Schools, and as an English teacher at Bristol Central High School. He completed his bachelor's degree in English Education and a master's degree in Education at the University of Connecticut and received his Sixth Year in Educational Administration and Leadership from Central Connecticut State University. A resident of West Hartford, Justin's collaborative style and passion for teaching and learning will serve the King Philip community and our school district well.



#### 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.

### Upcoming Events

**Conard play, "10 Minute Play Festival"**  
Conard Black Box  
Nov. 20, 21, 22, 7 p.m.  
Special performance for senior citizens (no charge): Nov. 19, 2 p.m.  
Tickets: \$10 adults; \$5 students  
Tickets available by emailing [conardhighdrama@gmail.com](mailto:conardhighdrama@gmail.com) or at the door

**Solisti Showcase**  
Location: Bristow Middle School  
Free, Nov. 16, 7 p.m.  
For information, call 860-232-4561 ext. 6389

**Hall play, "The Comedy of Errors"**  
Hall Black Box  
Dec. 11, 12, 13 at 7 p.m.  
Special performance for senior citizens (no charge): Dec. 10, 2 p.m.  
Tickets: \$10 adults  
\$5 students/senior citizens  
Call 860-232-4561, ext. 6363 for tickets

**Hall Choral Department, "Ye Olde Madrigal Feaste"**  
St. Thomas Seminary, 467 Bloomfield Ave, Bloomfield (All performances)  
Dec. 3 and 4, 7 p.m. - Student Show (dessert, no dinner), \$12  
Information and tickets: 860-232-4561, ext. 6390

Dec. 5 and 6, 7 p.m.,  
Dinner performance, \$35 adults;  
\$25 children & Hall faculty

Information and tickets:  
[HallMadrigals@gmail.com](mailto:HallMadrigals@gmail.com)  
Special performance for senior citizens (no charge): Dec. 3, 2 p.m.

**NOTE:** Tickets will not be sold at the door; reservations must be made in advance (before 11/8)

**Winter Concerts**  
Throughout the month of December check with individual schools for dates and times



### Veteran's Day 2014

Beginning five years ago, West Hartford Public Schools opened on Veterans Day to honor our community's veterans and to encourage our students to learn about patriotism and honor, in particular from those who are close to them.

Veterans Day, which is Tues., Nov. 11, honors all who have served in the Armed Forces, as distinct from Memorial Day, which honors those who died while serving.

Almost 22 million veterans - individuals who have served in the U.S. Armed Forces - live in the United States, according to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. Many West Hartford students and staff have a parent, grandparent, sibling or neighbor who is a veteran or who is still serving.

Each of our schools chooses meaningful ways to celebrate veterans and their special role as heroes. Veterans are invited into our schools for formal ceremonies. They spend time with our students, and they generously share their knowledge and experiences in informal breakfasts and programs. We are grateful to them for their service and for their participation in our programs.

2nd Issue

14-15

#### A Look Inside:

- King Philip Assistant Principal Announced
- The Importance of Early-Release Wednesdays
- Technology Update
- Tips for Successful Parent/Guardian-Teacher Conferences

## Why Wednesdays?

Each Wednesday, when students depart, teachers convene in schools across town to participate in learning sessions of their own. West Hartford's Curriculum and Staff Improvement (CSI) early-release Wednesdays have been integral to our district commitment to continuous improvement for more than 20 years.

Study after study has shown the quality of the teacher is the most important school-related factor affecting student achievement. Our longstanding dedication to professional learning is the most frequently cited reason we attract and retain high-quality teachers and leaders to work in West Hartford.

We also know from research that engaging teachers in regular, quality professional learning opportunities is a critical aspect to improving student learning. Through early-release Wednesdays, our teachers have the time to develop and enhance their knowledge, skills, and expertise to ensure the success of our students.

During two-hour sessions on Wednesdays, teachers and leaders facilitate and participate in grade level, department, school-wide and district-wide sessions to:

- Learn instructional strategies and techniques to engage students in learning
- Keep up-to-date with the latest research and trends in education
- Design and refine curriculum to challenge and excite students to learn
- Dig deeper into new programs or teaching practices specific to their discipline and reflect on how best to implement them in their classrooms
- Share and reflect on best teaching practice in collaboration with other teachers
- Review student work to develop shared understanding of learning standards

When asked, "Why are Wednesdays important?" teachers from across the district shared the following:

"Professional learning is at the heart of staying current in my profession. West



Top: Kerry Jones, director of Elementary Education, introduces the Collaborative Inquiry Process. Left: Pam Murphy, far left, department supervisor, Visual Arts, collaborates with her staff.



Hartford values this learning by providing time - really valuable time - to do this regularly with my peers, my evaluators, and my leadership."

"To best meet individualized and ever-changing needs of our students, teachers must continue to develop and refine our skills as well."

"The importance of pertinent and persistent professional development can't be underestimated in the message it sends to staff. We are a district of lifelong learners dedicated to exploring new ideas during this time."

"Wednesdays are a chance for me to become a student myself and to benefit from the other professionals I work with every day in a different way."

***"It's a time to strengthen your teaching through collaboration, learning and creating. We become better teachers!"***

"Truly, this time is so unique, and it is one of the things that places West Hartford at the forefront of education throughout the state."

Our professional development model provides for collective learning and the application and feedback on that learning to improve instructional practice. We are proud to provide such a well-defined and effective model for continuous professional learning and collaboration that supports high-quality instruction and improved student achievement.

## Successful Parent/Guardian-Teacher Conferences



Early each November, parents/guardians and teachers engage in a powerful activity to support students: the conference.

A home-school partnership, the conference reinforces a common bond that bolsters student academic, social, and emotional well-being. Each participant shares important information about the student,

## The New Website is Live! And Other Technology Updates

The Department of Technology is happy to report that the new website is live! The website includes new functionality such as eNotify/subscriptions. It also leverages responsive design, which automatically resizes websites to fit the screens of mobile devices. (See image at right).

Here are a few other projects we've completed or are working on:

- West Hartford has been recognized as a model of school technology and will present in the 2014 CABA/CAPSS Convention on Sat., Nov. 15, regarding consolidation of the administration of town and board information technology.
- Students in grades 11 and 12 are now able to send and receive emails outside the domain. This capability will allow them to interact with college advisors.
- We have launched a 4G laptop pilot program that enables high school students to sign the laptop out. Later this school year, 10 laptops with integrated 4G cellular service will be available for students to sign out in each high school library. These laptops may be taken home for a period of time and are ideal for students with limited or no Internet access from home.
- We have new Helpdesk options! Those who have a Helpdesk request may use the Shortcut on the teacher desktop or the link on the faculty/staff portal of our new website. This enables staff to enter incidents and monitor progress.
- PowerSchool - and our district Internet service - have been upgraded and moved to our data center, which provides full generator power, translating to improved uptime during power failures.
- More than 1,600 new Voice over IP (VoIP) phones have been added to all 16 schools. The public schools now fully utilize the town's infrastructure for the phone system.
- Tech Refresh: 65 percent of the computer fleet has been refreshed. By next summer, we anticipate greater than 90 percent.



SEARCH

FAMILIES / STUDENTS / FACULTY/STAFF



Our Mission is to inspire and prepare all students to realize their potential and enhance our global community.

District Info	BOE
Schools	Offices
Athletics	Calendar & News
Contact Us	



and parents/guardians learn about their child's progress in all developmental areas. To make the most effective and efficient use of limited conference time, it's critical that parents/guardians are as prepared as teachers. The following tips, taken from the Harvard Family Research Project's website ([www.hfrp.org/family-involvement](http://www.hfrp.org/family-involvement)), can help make the discussion highly productive:

- **Review.** Before the meeting, look over your child's grades, homework, and other progress reports and communications you've had with the teacher.
- **Prepare questions.** Bring a list of questions regarding all areas of progress.
- **Share information about your child.** Focus on learning needs and be eager to share what your child is like at home, including skills, strengths, interests, and activities that are met with enthusiasm. What are your child's needs and challenges? Does your child express thoughts about the future?
- **Be open.** Receive any feedback objectively to foster improvement in meeting school expectations and academic standards.
- **Ask questions.** Offer suggestions on how you can partner with your child's teacher to address challenges and find ways to enrich your child's experience at home.
- **Request clarification.** Ask teachers to clarify what assessments, grades, standards, and expectations mean.
- **Follow up.** Construct a plan of action. Who will do what, when, how, and how often in the months ahead?
- **Stay in touch.** Ask the teacher about

the best way for you both to remain in contact. This is at ALL levels and grades. Communication must be ongoing and aim to strike a balance.

- **Most important:** Talk with your child. Discuss what you learned and what you shared with the teacher. Have a conversation about how you plan to follow up and maintain contact. Above all, ask for input and suggestions from your child on ways he or she may demonstrate a part in this partnership.

The most advantageous parent/guardian-teacher conferences should cover your child, the classroom, and the future. Everyone in attendance at the parent/guardian-teacher conference is there for the same reason: your child's success.