

West Hartford Public Schools
Office of the Superintendent
50 South Main Street
West Hartford, CT 06107

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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

★ ★ Activities Planned to Honor Veterans ★ ★

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served their country, writing about a hero and the idea of what being a veteran means, making care packages for those presently serving in the armed forces, participating in flagpole ceremonies by presenting appropriate poems and singing patriotic songs, sending letters to veterans at Walter Reed

Hospital, and decorating jars filled with "Pennies for Poppies" to be donated to the VFW fund. All of these activities will help to deepen our students' understanding of and appreciation for the contributions of our veterans.

Upcoming Events

Hall play, "A Midsummer Night's Dream"
Hall High School Auditorium
November 4, 5, 6 at 7:00 PM
November 7, at 2:00 PM and 8:00 PM
November 8 at 2:00 PM
Special Performance for Senior Citizens:
November 4, 2:00 PM (no charge)
For tickets and information, call 232-4561,
voice mail 1066

Conard play, "Jake's Women"
Conard High School Auditorium
November 12, 13, 14 at 7:00 PM
For tickets and information, call 231-6024
Special Performance for Senior Citizens:
November 11 at 2:00 PM (no charge):

Hall Choral Department, "Ye Olde Madrigal Feaste"
St. Thomas Seminary, 467 Bloomfield Avenue, Bloomfield (All performances)
Student Show (snacks, no dinner):
November 18 & 19, 7:00 PM
Dinner performance:
November 20 & 21, 7:00 PM
Information & tickets, call 232-8226
Special Performance for Senior Citizens:
Wednesday, November 18, 2:00 PM (no charge)

Solisti Showcase
Location: Bristow Middle School
Free
Sunday, November 22 at 3:00 PM
For information, call 231-6038

Conard, Pops Concert
Instrumental Concert
Tuesday, November 24, 7:00 PM
Conard Auditorium, free

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

Hall, Orchestra Concert
Town Hall Auditorium, free (donations accepted)
Monday, December 7, 7:00 PM
For information, call 232-4561,
voice mail 1069

First Quarter

09-10

Connections is a districtwide publication presented to you by
the Office of the Superintendent, West Hartford Public Schools

Connections

With the West Hartford Public Schools

IMAGINE the Possibilities

Welcome to *Connections*, a quarterly newsletter focused on the West Hartford Public Schools. We have designed our new format to be more reader friendly, and our new logo reflects our continuing efforts to "go green." Please go to our website at www.whps.org for more information about programs, events and areas of interest.

Dr. Karen L. List
Superintendent of Schools



Kristi Luetjen –
Connecticut Teacher of the Year

Excellence Without Exception!

A Look Inside:

- Teacher Profiles: Kristi Luetjen
Elizabeth Devine
- Veteran's Day Tributes
- Post Graduation Choices:
Class of 2009
- New Administrative Assignments
- Inclement Weather Information



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.

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Kristi Luetjen – Connecticut Teacher of the Year



At Convocation ceremonies before the opening of school, Kristi Luetjen, this year's West Hartford Teacher of the Year, addressed her colleagues and invited guests. Sharing her journey through chemotherapy, radiation and the challenges of everyday teaching, Kristi acknowledged the support of a community. Herewith is an excerpted portion of her remarks:

"My hair was falling out by the handfuls... I didn't want a wig ... I DID want to spare my students the pain of looking at me in such an altered state ... I

was fighting every day to finish the school year that I had started... I said a silent prayer to God that I could pull off this wig without my students noticing... [one student] enthusiastically exclaimed, 'Ms. Luetjen, I didn't know it was crazy hat and hair day!' That was the end of the wig.

This is my story... a story of incredible highs and incredible lows... of hard work, perseverance, and ultimately, success... I did not do it alone... I have a team... made up of administrators, co-workers, and friends who said, 'Don't worry. We will take care of you.'

I got by with the help of 20 five year-olds... these children sustained me... kindergarten at Whiting Lane is THRIVING... we have implemented new reading and math programs [and] a new co-teaching model integrating students with special needs into general education classrooms... students are acquiring language and learning academics faster than ever before... in our kindergartens, we do yoga every week to help us to get strong, to stay calm, and to focus better.

As it turns out, all I really needed to learn I DID learn in kindergarten... at Whiting Lane School... As the famous poem concludes, 'It is still true, no matter how old you are, when you go out in the world, it is best to hold hands and stick together.' Whiting Lane has held me tight, and my life will never be the same."

We are all proud to "hold hands with Kristi" and offer her our congratulations on being recently named Connecticut Teacher of the Year.

IMAGINE the Possibilities

West
Hartford
Public
Schools

The Class of 2009:

Plans for the Future

In the August 25th edition of *The Hartford Courant*, an article on college admission policies noted that at the University of Connecticut and other schools in the state college system, applications have increased considerably. However, despite the increasingly competitive nature of admissions, our students have done exceedingly well in the state and across the nation. Conard and Hall High School guidance counselors processed over 3,000 applications, with a slight increase (from 4.2 to 4.3) in the average number of applications per student.

Working on campuses across the United States, students in this year's graduating class are pursuing interests that are as varied as the class itself. Students have chosen:

- Colleges from New England (Bates, Harvard) to the Southeast (Florida State, Emory)
- Technical schools (Massachusetts Institute of Technology Rochester Institute of Technology)
- Arts schools (Oberlin College of Music, Rhode Island School of Design, Berklee College of Music)
- Military careers in the US Army and Air Force
- Various community colleges as well as training in the world of work

The class of 2009 includes nationally recognized scholars, gifted musicians and artists, outstanding athletes and those whose contributions to our community have improved the lives of thousands of area residents.

Information on Weather Closings

In the event of inclement weather, local media will report any changes in school schedules. Parents are encouraged to do the following:

- contact the WHPS sourceline at 233-2334 OR contact the WHPS website at www.whps.org
- have a supervision plan in place; discuss that plan with family members
- note that early dismissal times are consistent: 11:00 High School; 11:45 Middle School; 1:00 Elementary

The school system makes decisions regarding closings on weather and road conditions. The safety of our students and staff is our top priority. Parents are encouraged to use their own judgment when deciding if conditions are safe for their child based on the location of their home and their child's route to school.

Activities Planned to Honor Veterans

Each of the schools across our district has planned activities to honor those who have served and are serving our country. Both high schools will be holding panel discussions and interviews with veterans. Our middle schools will honor veterans during their morning announcements, and they will conduct activities

that recognize the work of our veterans during conflicts and at times of peace. The elementary schools have planned their own individual activities such as: making cards and writing to veterans, interviewing family members who have

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Liz Devine – National Outstanding Secondary Social Studies Teacher of the Year

The National Council for the Social Studies has recognized Mrs. Elizabeth Devine as the Outstanding Secondary Social Studies Teacher of the Year. As a social studies teacher at Hall High School, Mrs. Devine teaches courses in American Studies, US Government, AP US History, and Human Rights; she is a former West Hartford Teacher of the Year. Appreciated by colleagues and students alike, Liz exemplifies all



... "helps students believe their presence, opinions and contributions are significant;"

the qualities of a master teacher: energy, compassion and infinite knowledge of her subject matter. Her students have noted that her classes are most interesting because of her passion for history, her use of guest speakers and her use of primary source material. Several of her former and present students have given testimony to her dedication and caring. They say that she: "helps students believe their presence, opinions and contributions are significant;" "guides students to interpret information in a relatable and comfortable way;" "not only believes in teaching history but also in the power that education ignites in students;" "always regards her students as mature adults who should be able to balance their social and academic life." They have also noted that: "her love for her work channels into her lectures" and "her dedication to her work has bettered the Hall High School community." One student summed up Liz' extraordinary skills by saying: "I felt like my opinions were being listened to and argued in a way that had never happened before."

New Administrators Enhance a Quality Leadership Team

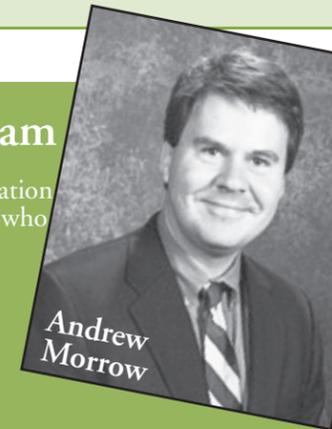
Instructional leaders who focus their attention on the actions of teachers as they relate to the education of students are crucial to any school system. We are fortunate to have five new administrators who understand the mission of the West Hartford Public Schools.

Andrew Morrow – new principal at Bristow Middle School. Andy came from Odessa, NY where he served as Principal at Odessa-Montour Middle/High School.

Patricia Susla – Math Department Supervisor. Patricia came from Woodstock Academy where she served as Math Department Chair and Math/Science Curriculum Coordinator.

Julio Duarte – Interim Assistant Principal at Conard High School, serving in the absence of Paul Vicinus who is serving our country in Afghanistan for the 2009-10 school year. Julio was a guidance counselor at Conard High School.

Noam Sturm – Assistant Principal at Smith School of Science, Math and Technology. Noam was the Curriculum Specialist at Whiting Lane.



Jackie Colon – Assistant Principal at Bristow Middle School. Jackie was a math/science teacher at Bristow Middle School.

Noam, Jackie and Julio were all members of the first cohort of the West Hartford Public Schools Leadership Academy. One of our goals for the Leadership Academy is to cultivate leadership among select staff through professional learning and independent projects. Cultivating talent from within enhances our ability to recruit and retain high quality candidates because they can see our commitment to providing on-going professional development and opportunities. Our Comprehensive Mentoring Program provides support for these new school administrators, and we are confident that they bring a skill set that will blend well with our current group of administrators.