

in this issue >>>

*What's New At
Stonington Public Schools*

September 2016

STONINGTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

“We Believe In You”

**Message from
Dr. Van Riley,
Superintendent of Schools**

We Believe In You!

Mission

Stonington Public Schools where we believe in all students. Through partnerships with family and community, we will provide an innovative and inspirational educational environment where students succeed with confidence and develop a love of life-long learning.

Vision

- *forward thinking**
- *fostering passions**
- *developing responsible citizens**
- *preparing for tomorrow's opportunities**

Last year, the Board of Education requested that a group of parents, teachers, support staff, and students update the district mission and vision statements. After several meetings, this representative group established the following statements, which were later officially adopted by the Board of Education.

During the group discussion, the idea of a slogan or motto was put forward. Everyone liked the idea of trying to simplify the focus of the Stonington Public Schools into a few words that truly represented what we all felt was key to student success. Of course, there were suggestions such as “Life Long Learners,” “Every Student Succeeds,” and “The Stonington Way.” During the discussion, Madison Geiger, a Stonington High School student was asked what she thought we all needed to focus on in order to let all students know we were supportive of their efforts and wanted them to succeed. Madison thought about it for a moment and then said (paraphrased), “If you believe in us, success will follow. We know we can do whatever we put our minds to....but we need you (teachers, staff, parents) to believe in us. How about ‘We Believe in You’ as our motto. If we know you believe in us, we will be successful whether in class or sports or life.” What a wonderful thought from one of our students. If we show students we believe in them, and we act that way in supporting them at school, they will succeed. It only took a few minutes for the group to fully embrace this concept and so our district motto was born, “We Believe in You.” Thanks Madison!

DEANS MILL SCHOOL

By: Jennifer McCurdy, Principal and Tom Bousquet, Assistant Principal

Deans Mill School is looking forward to making 2016-17 a positive, productive, and fun school year! Over the summer, we have created a number of new initiatives to improve the DMS Community and were able to hire some outstanding new staff members.

Here are a few highlights we have been able to accomplish this summer with the help of staff:

- New “bucket” challenges for students to enhance our bucket-filling program to support our community agreement - The DMS WISH!
- Worked on creating some protocols to increase consistency during less structured times of the day (recess/lunch) to improve safety and develop a positive school climate
- Worked on a new DMS website (to be launched this Fall)
- Created ways to further improve school culture! The theme with staff this year will be “Professional, Positive, Productive...and Fun!”



Stay tuned for some more information throughout the school year on...

- “Bucket” challenges for students...there will be lots of fun pictures as students meet these challenges!
- The return of the DMS Fall Festival sponsored by the DMS PTO coming in October!
- The creation of YouBlock - a designated time by grade level teams to focus on individual needs in all content areas.

Deans Mill School is excited to welcome two new certified staff members.

Ms. Alicia Cozzolino will be serving as a Special Education Teacher at DMS. Alicia received a Bachelor’s of Science in Communicative Disorders from the University of Rhode Island and a Master’s degree in Elementary and Elementary Special Education from Johnson and Wales University. Prior to teaching at Deans Mill, she taught special education with students in Kindergarten through fifth grade in Providence, Rhode Island for one year and most recently in Norwich, Connecticut for two years.



Mrs. Caitlin Rovella is very excited to join the Deans Mill School team this year as a first grade teacher! She is a graduate of Central Connecticut State University and is currently working on a Masters Program at Southern Connecticut State University to become a Reading Specialist. Prior to joining the DMS Team, Caitlin taught second grade for three years in New Britain.



Ms. Jessica Costa will be joining us as a paraprofessional. We have one additional paraprofessional vacancy that we hope to hire for the start of the school year!

Jenn & Tom

WE LOOK FORWARD TO A FUN-FILLED YEAR OF LEARNING AT DEANS MILL SCHOOL!

PAWCATUCK MIDDLE SCHOOL

By: Tim Smith, Principal

The countdown to the first day of school has begun! We would like to welcome all new and returning students to Pawcatuck Middle School for the 2016-17 school year. Over the summer, there have been some exciting changes we would like to share with you.

If you have stopped by or live in the immediate neighborhood, you know that the roof to our building is being replaced. Construction crews worked through the summer to replace the roof and make it weather tight. Although the work is substantially complete, the new edge caps along the roofline will not be ready for installation until mid-September. This is an important part of the new roof, as these edge caps replace the old concrete coping stones that were deteriorating. The new roof will enable PMS to remain in service for its centennial in 2038! Other upgrades in the building include phase two of our interior painting program. Throughout Pawcatuck Middle, we had many outdated murals. Some of these areas were also very faded and had some peeling paint. In phase one, we repainted the entire cafeteria. This summer we refinished two of the science rooms, a few hallways and two stairwells. The resurfacing of these walls give the areas a clean and professional updated look. We also added the next phase of installing instructional technology by adding four additional wall mounted projectors to classrooms. These projectors allow teachers to share web-based materials during instruction. In this upgrade, all of our science rooms now have this capability.

This year we will also complete the next phase in a few key areas of curriculum and instruction. We will continue the implementation of our new Reading Wonders curriculum in grade 5 and 6 as well as the Eureka math program, that was added as a new component to our math curriculum here in grades 5-8. In reading intervention we are improving and expanding our use of the Wilson reading program across all of the grades as well. We are also completing the next phase in Science instruction for grade 5 this year. Until last year, our 5th grade followed the elementary model of science instruction in the regular classroom. Last year we initiated a program of providing science instruction in a dedicated science lab by a teacher with a more specialized science certification. We feel strongly that giving our 5th grade students the experience of working in a science lab room is an important way to improve our focus on this important subject. Our other major change in instruction this year is the addition of a second period of language arts instruction for both grades 7 and 8. Last year we scheduled a double block of language arts instruction in grades 5 and 6 as part of the Wonders program. This year we are rolling that concept up to grades 7 and 8 to increase the instructional minutes for students in reading and writing.

Additionally, we are pleased to welcome both new and familiar faces in our staff. Richard Manning, who comes with several years of experience of teaching music in Hartford and New Haven, will be our new band director. Joining us from the Windham school system, Joshua Marsh will be teaching 7th and 8th grade English language arts. Returning to us from Mystic Middle School are 5th grade science teacher Stephanie Akers and 6th and 7th grade teacher Leah Nero. Mikaela Morrone also joins our special education staff after teaching at Stonington High School last year. Our eighth grade team also has two familiar faces returning this school year. Math teacher Lucy Freitas will be back in the classroom this year after an extended leave. After serving as our assistant principal, Mrs. Bausch, a former district Teacher of the Year, returns to her love of teaching as our 8th grade science teacher. Also joining us as our new assistant principal is Deanna Brucoli. Mrs. Brucoli comes with many years of experience in New London Public Schools in a variety of positions, including teaching English, department chairperson, summer school director, and humanities coordinator. She is incredibly excited to be here and looks forward to meeting and working with Pawcatuck's students, families, and staff.

MYSTIC MIDDLE SCHOOL

By: Greg Keith, Principal

We have had a great start to the year at Mystic Middle School. We welcomed three new teachers and four new paraprofessionals to our staff. Lisa Babcock joined us as a 7th and 8th grade Special Education Teacher, Jessica Monahan joined us as the Art Teacher, and Stephanie Pellegrino joined us as the 8th grade Science Teacher. Terri Hinchey has joined our staff as the Library Paraprofessional, and Pam de Vries, Shelly Holliday, and Jennifer Denecour join us as Special Education Paraprofessionals.

As we begin the new school year, we are focusing on improving implementation of our advisory program, called DENS, with the goal of continuing to ensure students have at least one adult with whom they connect regularly to ensure they feel safe at school. We are also refining the ICE block (Intervention, Community Building, and Enrichment) in order to make it more meaningful for all students. We are in the second year of implementing Eureka Math and we continue with the implementation of the new Social Studies Units. We recently had a school-wide assembly where students were able to show their school spirit by wearing their team colors and participating in a friendly tug-o-war competition.



WEST BROAD STREET SCHOOL/WEST VINE STREET SCHOOL

By: Alicia Dawe, Principal

As we begin another wonderful school year at West Vine and West Broad Street Schools, we are pleased to introduce our three new staff members for the 2016-2017 school year!

Kim Howard will be our new second grade teacher at West Vine Street School. She graduated Magna Cum Laude with a bachelor's degree from Rhode Island College with a focus in elementary education and mathematics. Kim, who grew up in Stonington, is committed to the academic and personal growth of children, and her enthusiasm and collaborative nature will be an asset to our school.

Laura Conti will be our new special ed teacher at West Broad Street School. She graduated with a Master's Degree from Southern Connecticut State University with a focus in special education and a Bachelor's Degree from Connecticut College in Child Development. She comes to us from New London Public Schools and we are thrilled to have her on board!

Lastly, we hired a new social worker, Ms. Kathryn Noonan. She graduated with a Master's Degree in Social Work from The University of Connecticut and a Bachelor's Degree from Southern Connecticut State in Social Work. Kathryn comes to us with a background in clinical and behavioral experiences; we are looking forward to her joining our family!

New to our building but not to the district is Monique Bruno who will be our school psychologist at West Vine. Mike Andruchwe who was our school psychologist at West Vine will now be at West Broad.



THIS WILL BE A FANTASTIC YEAR!

Programming

W.I.N. Block- "What I Need" block is our new intervention and enrichment block.- The main goal of WIN is to provide literacy and mathematical interventions, supports, and enrichments based on the personalized learning needs of each student using data to drive instruction.

West Vine Street School and West Broad Street School will pilot a mentor/volunteer program with Stonington High School Seniors. The program will be overseen and facilitated by Stonington High School Senior, Ms. Hannah Garvey!

We have expanded our Unified Programs to include Unified Sports, Unified Arts, and Unified Social Club. These clubs promote the inclusion of all children and provides fun opportunities for students to get together to socialize, work collaboratively on projects, engage in fun activities, and much more, all while building friendships!

Eureka- For the upcoming school year, Eureka math will be utilized as the primary resource for mathematics in grades K-4. This past year, grades 3-4 piloted the resources with great success.

We just completed our second annual Summer Academy at West Vine Street School. This program was available to students in grades K-4 who were receiving Tier 2 and 3 intervention in literacy and mathematics. This year, the program ran for 2 weeks, 50 students attended with near perfect attendance each day!



STONINGTON HIGH SCHOOL

by: Mark Friese, Principal

What is New at Stonington High School?

New Safety Protocol

We will be exercising an increased safety protocol for visitors entering the building during the school day. All visitors will now have to:

1. Ring buzzer and state your reason for entering (as before).
2. Upon entering the lighthouse, you will now have to wait for a visual recognition by a secretary who will then buzz again to provide access to the office area.

This extra step provides an increased level of security that is necessary to ensure the safety of our staff and students.



Administrative Change on the Awarding of Credits

Effective for the 2016/2017 school year, Stonington High School will award credits at the end of each semester. (January and June). Students enrolled in year-long one credit classes; will be awarded, if earned, one-half credit (.5) at the end of semester 1 and one-half credit (.5), if earned, will be awarded at the end of semester 2. Should a student fail a semester, it can be made up in summer school or during the following school year. If a student fails the first semester, he/she will remain in the class for the second semester. With this change, the senior class valedictorian, salutatorian, and Stonington Scholars will be announced at the end of the first semester of the senior year.

New Courses at SHS

New courses have been developed to meet the needs of all learners and to ensure not only their success but also to prepare them for college and careers after high school. New courses are:

Vocational Mathematics - developed to provide the mathematical skills necessary for various career pathways or college

Mobile CSP - A freshmen level course designed to introduce computer programming. This course along with our established Game Development and Design, Web Development, Programming and AP Computer Science courses provides our students a robust pathway into the computer science fields

Physical Science - This course is a revision of our CEP course. It is aligned with the recently adopted Next Generation Science Standards and will provide a much broader science experience with the inclusion of more physical science concepts and astronomy.



**TEACHER OF THE YEAR
2017
MARY LOU DEVINE**



Curriculum & Instruction Report

By: Nikki Gullickson, Assistant Superintendent

The responsibilities of the Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum & Instruction include the implementation of all K-12 district curriculum, coordination of all district and state assessments, orchestration and support of professional development for teachers and administrators, as well as oversight of the educator evaluation system. To date our work in Curriculum & Instruction continues to create district wide coherence around the improvement of student performance.

Our spring 2016 student achievement and performance highlights from the Grade 11 School Day SAT, CMT/CAPT Science and grades 3-8 Smarter Balanced Assessments include:

- 78% of Grade 11 students scored at Level 3 & 4 in the area of English Language Arts on the School Day SAT.
- 81% of Grade 3 students district -wide scored at Level 3 & 4 (meeting / exceeding the achievement standards) in English Language Arts, an increase of 10% while grade 8 saw an increase of students meeting/exceeding the achievement standards by 12% from 2015.
- In the area of Math, significant improvements were seen in grades 3, 5 and 8.
- In Science, all 3 tested grades (5, 8 and 10) saw of students at or above goal, with the most significant increase at grade 8 (13.5% above the 2015 results).

Looking ahead in the 2016-17 school year, as a district we will continue to address those areas of concern within our instruction and curriculum.

We remain committed to creating an educational environment that develops and supports students who are knowledgeable, problem solving, productive citizens.

West Vine Street School and Deans Mill Street School Building Project

By: Deborah Downie, Board Representative

The K-12 School Building Committee has been busy collaborating with Stonington Public Schools administrators, teachers and staff as well as the architect (DRA) and the Construction Manager (Gilbane) to finalize Detailed Design Plans for Deans Mill School and West Vine Street School. At this point, the Detailed Design phase is nearing completion and the project is on track for completion in time for the beginning of the 2018/2019 school year. Preliminary site work will begin at both schools as early as April 2016. There will be a Community Information Meeting at Stonington High School tentatively planned for late October to review the status of the project, give the public an opportunity to see the plans and to outline the planned construction phasing for the project.

In addition to working on the elementary school designs, this summer, the K-12 Building Committee oversaw the installation of a new roof at Pawcatuck Middle School. The roof is currently in the final stages of completion and looks great!

Take a look at our new website at
www.stoningtonschools.org

**Stonington Public Schools wants your comments regarding our
new website email us
at www.webmaster@stoningtonschools.org!**