

SUPERINTENDENT'S CONNECTION

KEEPING YOU IN THE KNOW!



Hartford Public Schools

JANUARY 2006

Mr. Henry was King Balthazar in the annual Three Kings Day Parade, January 6, 2006!



A Message from the Superintendent...

Tremendous progress has been made in the Hartford Public Schools over the last five years. The graduation rate has improved to 63% last year compared with 39% in 1999. The drop-out rate has been cut in half, from 44% in 1999 to 21% last year. More of our students are going to college, and more are being registered in Pre-K classes than ever before. Outside suspensions dropped by 15% last year compared with the year before, and our ticketing policy at Bulkeley and Hartford Public High Schools has not only attracted national media attention, it has also quieted the hallways and improved the school climate, according to the Principals.

In addition, more than 1,000 suburban children are attending one of Hartford's 10 inter-district magnet schools, and two new magnets will be added next year. Also, the district, in cooperation with the City of Hartford and the State of Connecticut, has embarked on a \$1 billion capital improvement plan, which will result in the modernization and improvement of the vast majority of our schools.

Most importantly, student achievement is improving! Dwight Elementary School was named a national Blue Ribbon School last year, joining Simpson-Waverly, and just recently, we were notified that Hartford Magnet Middle School has been nominated to receive a Blue Ribbon next year. Also, last year, two more schools were taken off the NCLB "watch list," and we are anticipating even more progress this year.

So, while we are headed in the right direction, we have miles to go before we can realize our mission of seeing that all of our students achieve according to their potential and receive the top-quality education they deserve.

CMTs and CAPTs will be given in March this year. Whether we like it or not, they are what the outside world looks at when measuring the success of a school system. So I ask you to "Kick it Up a Notch" when you return from the Holiday break and make sure that your children are focused and prepared to perform at their best this spring.

Meanwhile, please accept my best wishes to you and yours for a great 2006! Kick it up a notch!

Robert Henry, Superintendent of Schools



Superintendent
Robert Henry

Upcoming Board of Education Meetings

January 24, 2006
260 Constitution Plaza

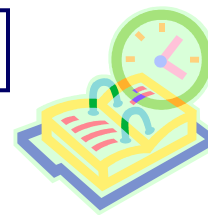
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February 7, 2006  
Annie Fisher Magnet School  
280 Plainfield Street

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February 28, 2006
260 Constitution Plaza

Hartford Schools Calendar



January 6 ~ Three Kings Day
No School

January 16 ~ Martin Luther King Jr. Day
School System Closed

January 19 ~ Professional Development
2 Hour Early Release

February 3 ~ Teacher In-Service Day

Magnet School Fairs:

January 18 ~ 5:30—7:30 p.m. ~ Learning Corridor Cafeteria, 43 Vernon Street, Hartford

January 21 ~ 10 a.m.—12 noon ~ Classical Magnet School, 85 Woodland Street, Hartford

PEOPLE IN THE NEWS...



Welcome our new Board of Education

Honorable Mayor Eddie A. Perez, Chair

Elizabeth Brad Noel, Vice Chair

Pamela M. Richmond, Secretary

Andrea Comer

Luis Rodriguez-Davila

Israel Flores

David M. MacDonald

Ada M. Miranda

Sharon Patterson-Stallings

Visit our website for more information on
the good news in our schools!

www.hartfordschools.org

~ THREE GOOD THINGS ~

Have you ever run into a friend while you're waiting in the check-out line at the supermarket, and you get the question, "So what's new at the Hartford Public Schools?" Here are three good things to mention.

We have three Blue Ribbon schools. Simpson-Waverly was named in 2003, Dwight in 2005, and Hartford Magnet Middle School has just received word that it has been nominated for an award, which will be presented this year! The U.S. Department of Education presents these awards to only a few schools in each state annually.

Hartford Public Schools has made a \$1 billion investment in new and improved schools. Seven renovated and expanded schools will be opening next year (\$300 million) another 20 buildings are on the schedule for renovations over the coming seven years.

All Hartford Public Schools have been accredited by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC). To have all schools in a district accredited is very rare.



AP PROGRAM STRENGTHENED THIS YEAR

Thanks to a joint effort involving Joan Harte, lead principal for high schools, Marcus Rivera of the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE), and Guidance staff at all high schools, the Hartford Public Schools' Advanced Placement program has been greatly improved this year.

Total enrollment has increased from 82 students last year to 390 this year. This is a result of changing the process for identifying students who have the potential to do AP work. In the past, guidance staff recommended students based primarily on teacher referrals. Now, there are a number of objective criteria that include PSAT scores, CMT scores, latest grades, Stanford test scores, and other measures that help identify students who have the potential to succeed in AP courses.

In addition to Joan Harte, and Marcus Rivera, much credit goes to Mary Giuliano, Coordinator of Smaller Learning Communities, and Jean Purcell, head of the Gifted and Talented Program at the State Department of Education.

Superintendent Henry Visits China

Mr. Henry was among a group of Connecticut school Superintendents who traveled to China in November with Connecticut Education Commissioner Betty Sternberg. Ilene Lowenstein, district coordinator for Social Studies, accompanied Mr. Henry on the 10-day visit.

The purpose of the trip was to observe the Chinese educational system, provide professional development sessions, and share educational and cultural information. While visiting the city of Zhuhai, a coastal city in southern China with historic ties to Hartford, Mr. Henry finalized an exchange agreement with school officials that will bring several Chinese teachers and students to Hartford next year and, later, will send a group of teachers from Hartford to teach in Zhuhai for a period of three months. In addition, a group of Hartford Public School students will visit Zhuhai for a two-week period.



In this corner of the school, only English can be spoken!



At the Great Wall of China



Dwight School Honored by CSDE and CBIA

Hartford's Dwight Elementary School was one of four schools state-wide to receive the first-ever "Vanguard Schools of Excellence" award from the Connecticut Business and Industry Association (CBIA) and the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE).

The Connecticut Vanguard Schools Initiative recognizes schools that have demonstrated success in improving educational performance. Vanguard schools then share their successful strategies and best practices with other school districts to help them replicate these effective programs.

"The selection process was very competitive," said Fran Rabinowitz, associate director of the CSDE. Rabinowitz said the award was developed as part of the federal No Child Left Behind law, which calls for states to improve the academic performance of students in poor performing schools.

Dwight Principal Stacey McCann said, "We are extremely excited about being named a Vanguard School. Our strength is found among our teachers, parents, and our diverse group of students from over 21 countries speaking over 14 languages."

Each Vanguard School receives \$15,000 to discretionary use to continue implementing best practices, \$5,000 to share best practices with schools in need of improvement, as well as state-wide public and professional recognition.

Former Weaver Student Receives Law Degree

Five years ago, Kevin Henry fantasized about being a lawyer as he took an evening stroll through the University of Connecticut School of Law campus. Last May, Kevin's dreams became a reality as he and 244 fellow students received their law degrees in the Law School's 81st commencement exercises.

Chosen by his classmates to speak on behalf of the Evening Division graduates, Kevin quipped, "Today I stand before you as a graduate of Weaver High School in Hartford with no criminal record." He went on to deliver an emotional speech, sharing how he lost his mother to heroin for 13 years before she found the courage to get straight. "Today, I am smiling for my mother, my best friend, who passed away (one year ago). Today, I stand before you as a graduate of a prestigious law school, and I know my mother is with me."

Congratulations Kevin!



HMMS Receives Blue Ribbon Nomination



Hartford Magnet Middle School may become the third Hartford Public School to be named a federal “Blue Ribbon School.”

HMMS Principal Cecilia J. Green received word of the nomination in a letter dated November 29 from the U.S. Department of Education. The letter said, “This prestigious award was established to honor elementary and secondary schools that make significant progress in closing the achievement gap or whose students achieve at the highest levels. Your school has been nominated as one of those schools.”

Last year, Dwight Elementary School was one of only three schools in Connecticut to be recognized. Simpson-Waverly was the first Hartford school to achieve Blue Ribbon status in 2003.

HMMS must now complete a rigorous and thorough application process in order to receive the actual award in the fall of next year.

Hartford Magnet Middle School has 600 students in grades 6 to 8, who live in Hartford and 22 surrounding towns.

Ms. Green said, “It is a great honor just to be nominated for this award, and we will do our very best to fulfill the requirements of the DOE’s application process so that we can be sure to receive the award next fall.”

Superintendent Robert Henry said, “We are very proud to have three of our schools receive this award. It is a great tribute to the professionalism and leadership of Ms. Green and her predecessor, Delores Bolton, who laid the groundwork that made this possible.” Bolton, who was HMMS Principal until this year, is currently Assistant Superintendent for Magnet Schools.

SAND Students Raise \$200

Students at SAND Elementary School recently held a penny drive to benefit victims of Hurricane Katrina who have relocated to Connecticut. More than \$200 was given to the Greater Hartford Chapter of the American Red Cross in a ceremony in early November. Carol Wright, SAND Principal, said, “School-wide, we are emphasizing the character values of respect, responsibility and caring. The students demonstrated caring and helping others by organizing and contributing to this penny drive. We are very proud of them.”



HPHS Senior Honored for Academic Excellence

Adam L. Reyes, a senior at Hartford Public High School, has been recognized by the College Board’s National Hispanic Recognition Program for his exceptional academic achievements. Adam was among an elite group of 4,800 students selected from more than 150,000 Hispanic students nationwide for his outstanding performance on the PSAT, which students take in their junior year.

Congratulations Adam!

Where are you going to college?

Hartford Public High School Engineering Students Build Bridges



Technology students at Hartford Public High School in Mr. Sikora's Pre-Engineering class were able to test their popsicle bridges using the Structural Stress Analyzer Tester pro-

vided by Quirk Middle School. Students studied civil engineering before designing and building their bridges. Students are now testing their bridges, which have held more than 160 pounds! The tester provides a great way to test the bridges and produces a computer printout for students to further improve their bridge.



Students from Bulkeley and Weaver High Schools spent the day at M.D. Fox and Mark Twain Elementary respectively, reading to kids as part of the Ramp Up program.

