

WPS Update

January 2018

The mission of the Wolcott Public Schools is to promote the academic, social, and emotional development of all students to become contributing members of the global community.

"The function of education is to teach one to think intensively and to think critically. Intelligence plus character—that is the goal of true education."
— Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.



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A Message from the Board Chairman and Superintendent:

We know that there have been many questions in the community about the recent incident involving a Wolcott High School Student. We will do our best to address here our commitment to the safety and security of our schools.

Steps that we've taken since the incident:

- All schools will have presentations to discuss overall school safety with students and to reinforce the See Something, Say Something mantra. We encourage all students and staff to feel comfortable and confident speaking with any adult in their school if they have any concern at all. This includes issues of safety, a student in need of support, or bullying activity.
- We have reviewed our security procedures and made changes as necessary.
- School counselors have been constantly available for any student who would like to discuss thoughts or feelings about what occurred. Each of our schools has access to at least one mental-health professional and TMS and WHS have several. These professionals are here to serve the social, emotional, and the academic needs of all students.
- The Board of Education will be briefed by members of the Wolcott Police Department (WPD) on this matter and will consider any policy changes that may be necessary.
- Members of the public who are interested in addressing the Board on any topic may do so during the "Time for the Public" portion of the agenda of regular meetings. The next regular meeting of the Board is on February 12th.
- We have and will continue to share with you information as we are able without impeding the criminal investigation or violating privacy guidelines.

Our ongoing work to support the safety of our schools:

- We have updated the way in which security drills are conducted. State law requires that all schools conduct lock-down drills at least once every three months. We have a reporting system for the drills that ensures each child's safety. These drills are overseen by the Principal and our Director of Facilities & Security attends a drill at each school to ensure proper procedure and to support the Principal.
- This past summer, we held a "tabletop exercise" in collaboration with the Wolcott Police Department and Chet Sergey (our local emergency planning official). Also in attendance were all school and district administrators, school nurses, and head secretaries. The group was taken through a mock active-shooter scenario and was allowed to debrief, looking for possible improvements in practice. We will hold another such exercise this summer.
- All of our drill procedures are designed in collaboration with experts from the WPD.
- Last year we provided magnets for all classrooms in the district that go over the door jamb. This allows the door knobs to always be kept in the locked position so that the teacher does not have to step into the hallway in order to quickly lock his/her classroom door.
- We have coverage at each school of security cameras and buzz-in systems for public entry doors.
- Last year we enhanced the security of all of our Latchkey sites by providing a locking keypad entry at each building.

Update published on January 24th:

We would like to update you once again on the matter involving a WHS student and a handgun. As the Superintendent stated in an earlier update, because this is an active police investigation and the person involved is a minor, we cannot release many details. However, we want to assure you of the following:

- The school administration reacted immediately to the concern when it was brought to their attention and communicated immediately with the Wolcott Police Department.
- There was no delay in the WPD's reaction to the concern.
- The WPD and school administration continuously communicated and took actions to ensure that the school, students, and staff remained safe.
- As soon as the student's arrest was confirmed, we began communicating this with you.
- The Superintendent will be meeting with the school administration to determine if any changes are necessary in our protocols and procedures.

We understand that you may have many questions about this incident but we thank you for understanding our duty to protect the privacy of a student. Safety and security of our buildings and campuses remains our first order of business and we will continue to do everything within our power to that end.

If you have further questions, the Superintendent will be happy to address them to the extent that he can. Please do not hesitate to call or email: Superintendent Tony Gasper, agasper@wolcottps.org or 203-879-8183

In partnership,

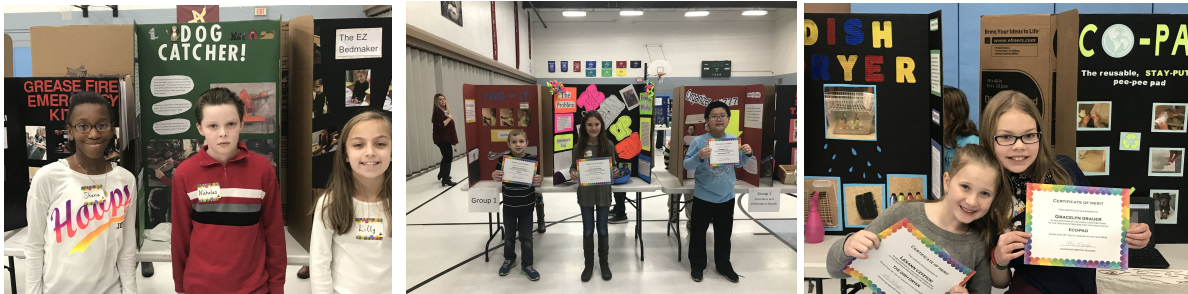
Lori Delbuono-Bartlett, Board of Education Chairman

Tony Gasper, Ed.D., Superintendent of Schools



Alcott School:

On Wednesday, January 10th Alcott fourth graders participated in the Alcott's Invention Convention. There were many innovative ideas and everyone worked hard on their inventions. The inventions and boards were presented to judges from town and five students were chosen to move on to the town wide convention that will be held between the three elementary schools later this school year. Those students are Shania with her invention "The Grease Fire Emergency Kit", Logan with his invention "The Charger Pack", Joey with "The Body Umbrella", Lexanne with the "Dish Dryer", and Jake with his invention "Pawicure". From that competition inventors are chosen to move on and compete at the state level Great job to all of our inventors and good luck to our inventors who are continuing on!!



Contact Shawn Simpson, Principal of Alcott School: ssimpson@wolcottps.org

Frisbie School:

On Friday, January 19th, Renata Bowers, author of the Frieda B. series of children's books, came to Frisbie for an author visit. Through her books, Renata encourages students to believe in themselves and dream big. By using a demonstration, she proved to students that everyone holds a unique story inside of them waiting to be shared with others. While reading the book Frieda B. and the Zillabeast to students in Grades 2 and 3, students learned the importance of putting others first while connecting the book to our Look for the Good campaign. Renata has asked Frisbie students to participate in her new business endeavor by designing notecards to share with others. Students will personalize cards with encouraging words and artwork related to the importance of believing in your dreams and the story of others. A special thank you to the PTO for sponsoring this event.



Contact Kim Murtaugh, Principal of Frisbie School: kmurtaugh@wolcottps.org

Wakelee School:

We had a fun and informative assembly on Wednesday, January 10th for the K-2 students. Symmetry® Hand Hygiene Company supplies our school with hand soaps and hand sanitizers. They brought their mascot, Biscuit, the Paw-Washing Dog, to our school today. In addition, they played a game called “What’s Wrong with This Picture?” with the students that emphasized when a student should have washed or sanitized their hands. They also shared some eye-opening facts about germs and stressed that proper hand washing should last for 20 seconds. The students certainly enjoyed the assembly and we were excited about reinforcing the importance of healthy hand hygiene!

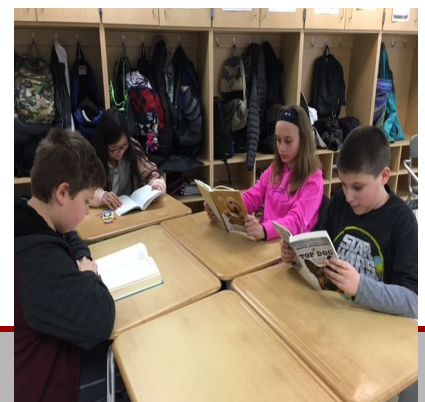


Joe Cornelio, Natalia Gajecki, Patrick Grasso, Nayoung Kwon, Ayden Osvald, and Taylor Schepis attended the Elementary Level Student Leadership Conference at Naugatuck Valley Community College sponsored by the Connecticut Association of Schools. The purpose of the conference was to provide students with the opportunity to develop skills needed to be effective leaders. Students participated in hands-on activities designed to foster leadership skills in productive thinking, decision making, communication and creative problem solving.

Contact Deborah Osvald, Principal of Wakelee School: dosvald@wolcottps.org

Tyrrell Middle School:

Tyrrell students, faculty and staff have been engaged in an ongoing schoolwide literacy initiative entitled Team Read 2.0. The program is designed to promote a culture of literacy with an emphasis on the genuine enjoyment of reading as a pleasurable leisure activity. Multiple times each week, students spend time reading literature from a genre and topic of their choice. With this initiative in mind, teachers have been designing learning activities that integrate grade level curricula with many of the concepts associated with the Team Read 2.0 initiative. In Grade 6, Mrs. Tedeschi's students have started their own book blogging site. On this site, students can share books that they have enjoyed or even the books that they may think are not the best to read. Students seem to be enjoying this ongoing activity and continuously update the site as they read different books. In Grade 7, students are participating in a reading unit entitled “Be A Changemaker”. In this unit, students were given a choice of books to choose from, and were then assigned to book groups based on the title selected by each student. Each of the novels centered on a character that has made a positive contribution to the lives of others.



As the students progressed through the novels, they regularly discussed major events in the book, as well as citations, language, and characters that resonated with them. In addition, the unit contains a reflection component in which each student is to use the characters and events from the novel as a motivator as to how they can become “Changemakers” in our world. Grade 8 Pearl Team has recently completed several project based learning activities that were aligned to stories being read as part of their current literacy unit. Students recently completed “One Pagers” and “Movie Posters” which incorporated student reading into performance tasks. While the titles of these projects may indicate that these projects are simplistic in nature, quite the opposite is true. Many components of these projects required abstract thinking skills such as inferencing, as well as interpretation and analysis of text.

Contact Joseph Norcross, Principal of Tyrrell Middle School: jnorcross@wolcottps.org

Wolcott High School:

Greetings from Wolcott High School. It is amazing to think that we are already past the halfway point of the school year with mid term exams behind us. On Tuesday night February 13 our Parent Action Council will be meeting in the Resource Center at the High School at 6:30 PM. The administration will be holding a conversation regarding our district’s Vision of a Graduate. We will be seeking input from parents on what they feel are the most essential skills and attributes to help prepare our students for future success. Our goal is to take feedback from this meeting and share it with our school leadership team to help formulate a Wolcott High School Vision of the Graduate that aligns with the District’s vision. Please consider joining us that evening to participate in this process.

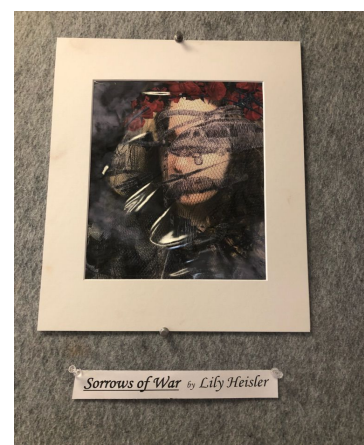
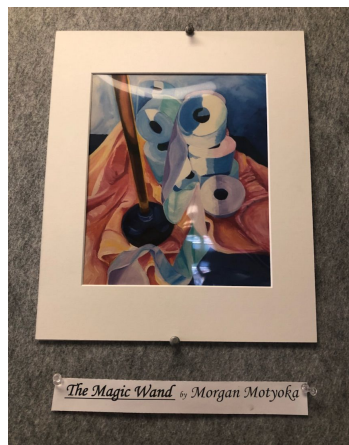


Our students continue to contribute to our community in a variety of ways. Whether helping out at the local food pantry, serving at local soup kitchens or hosting “Cocoa Cram” in preparation for exams, they are giving back. In particular, I want to acknowledge the work of our National Honor Society, Student Government and Community Service Club for their recent efforts in the community.



January 6, was a big day for our Robotics team. Over forty teams and hundreds of students, mentors, and parents attended the FIRST Robotics Competition Kick Off at Wolcott High School. This year’s game is POWER UP and can be seen many places including YouTube by searching “FRC power up”. Over the next 6 weeks our team will be working extremely hard making a robot to meet this challenge. We wish the team well as they embark on this journey that hopefully once again culminates at the First Robotics World Championships.

Great news from our Art program, Morgan Matyoka, a WHS art student, has been selected in the Scholastic Art Awards Competition to exhibit in the Silpe Gallery of the University of Hartford. Selection for exhibit, sponsored by the Connecticut Art Education Association and NAEA, is a prestigious acknowledgment given to only about twenty percent of all entrants who already represent the best student artists from across the state. Morgan’s artwork will represent Wolcott in the show from January 14 to February 2nd and is open to the public. Students Lily Heisler and Grace Stearns were also part of the competition with digital and watercolor artworks that will be on display in the WHS art gallery.



Contact Walter Drewry, Principal of Wolcott High School: wdrewry@wolcottps.org

Student Services:

Wolcott students from the District's 18-21 Transition program, coordinated by Brittany Garguilo, have been participating in many new and exciting job site experiences. Program participants are learning a wide range of job skills from sorting and stocking to working with clothing materials in a retail setting. These young adults go into the Wolcott community and surrounding areas with their paraprofessionals who assist them in their job tasks and responsibilities.

Paraprofessionals are monitoring the students independence and ensuring that they are following appropriate workplace etiquette, including greeting customers and responding positively to their supervisors directives. This is a great way to support our local community businesses through a reciprocal relationship. Students receive extensive job experience and the employers view them as a positive asset to the workplace environment. The program would like to sincerely thank the local businesses that are part of this great learning opportunity for our students in the 2017-18 year as they are learning to transition to independent employment! The program is grateful to the following businesses:

La Fortuna
Nutmeg Farms
Teta Active Apparel
Urban Floral
Wakelee School
Wolcott Resource Center (Food Pantry)
Wolcott Town Hall
Chapter 126 (Bristol)
Big Lots (Waterbury)
Petco (Waterbury)
TJ Maxx (Waterbury)

Contact Kevin Hollis, Director of Student Services and Alternative Education:
khollis@wolcottps.org



Business & Operations:

Winter...not everyone loves it.



Alcott School - Front Entrance/Parking Area
(Only 2 hours into the storm)

As everyone is aware, we had some very difficult weather to deal with this past month. As nice as it was to have a “White Christmas” the amount of snowfall combined with the bitter cold temperatures made the snow removal process very difficult.

Blizzard “Brody” dropped a great deal of snow along with 40 to 50 mile an hour winds. Our custodial and maintenance staff were called in on Thursday, in the middle of this storm, to try to remove the snow so we could have school on Friday. Unfortunately, the amount of snow and the windy conditions made it impossible.



To make our buildings and parking lots safe, our custodians and maintenance employees spent the next three days clearing snow to keep the snow drifts manageable in sub-freezing temperatures. Our buildings held up rather well with record setting cold temperatures. Many thanks to the custodial and maintenance staff for their efforts.

Contact Dave Stankus, Director of Facilities & Security: dstankus@wolcottps.org



My teacher
thought I was
smarter than I
was – so I was.

Six-year-old