



WPS Update

April 2019

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.

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From the Board Chairman & Superintendent:

We'd like to commend and congratulate our faculty and administration on a large number of accomplishments this year. Across all phases of our school community, we have much to be proud of.

- We learned this week that Wolcott High School's performance on the SAT has increased by 8.6% from last year to this year and is up over a four-year trend as well.
- On our internal, i-Ready assessments, students are showing good growth as well. Both ELA and Math are up 2.5% since this time last year.
- Wolcott High School was awarded the College Board Honor Roll for the number of students taking and passing Advanced Placement tests and was also named as among the top 10% of high schools in the state for awarding UCONN credit.



- We have improved our student attendance rate over time. For both the general student population and among students designated as “high need” we now have the best student attendance rates among all similar districts.
- In fact, for overall Accountability Index score, SBAC English Language Arts, SBAC Math, chronic absenteeism, success on college-and-career-readiness exams, on-track to graduation measures, high-need student graduation rate, acceptance into two- and four-year colleges, and even physical fitness we rank first among similar Connecticut school districts.
- Where, just a short time ago, our performance was similar to districts like Cromwell, Region 14, and Berlin... We now outperform many more affluent districts such as Bolton, Canton, Glastonbury, East Lyme, Westbrook, and Madison.
- Our students are succeeding outside of the classrooms as well with awards, recognitions, and championships in athletics, robotics, and the Invention Convention.

These accomplishments would not be possible without a strong dedication from all facets of our school community: our supportive Board of Education, dedicated Central Office staff, school administrators, teachers, counselors, mental health professionals, and support staff of all types. We are proving what can be accomplished when all members of an organization collaborate and hold each other to high expectations.

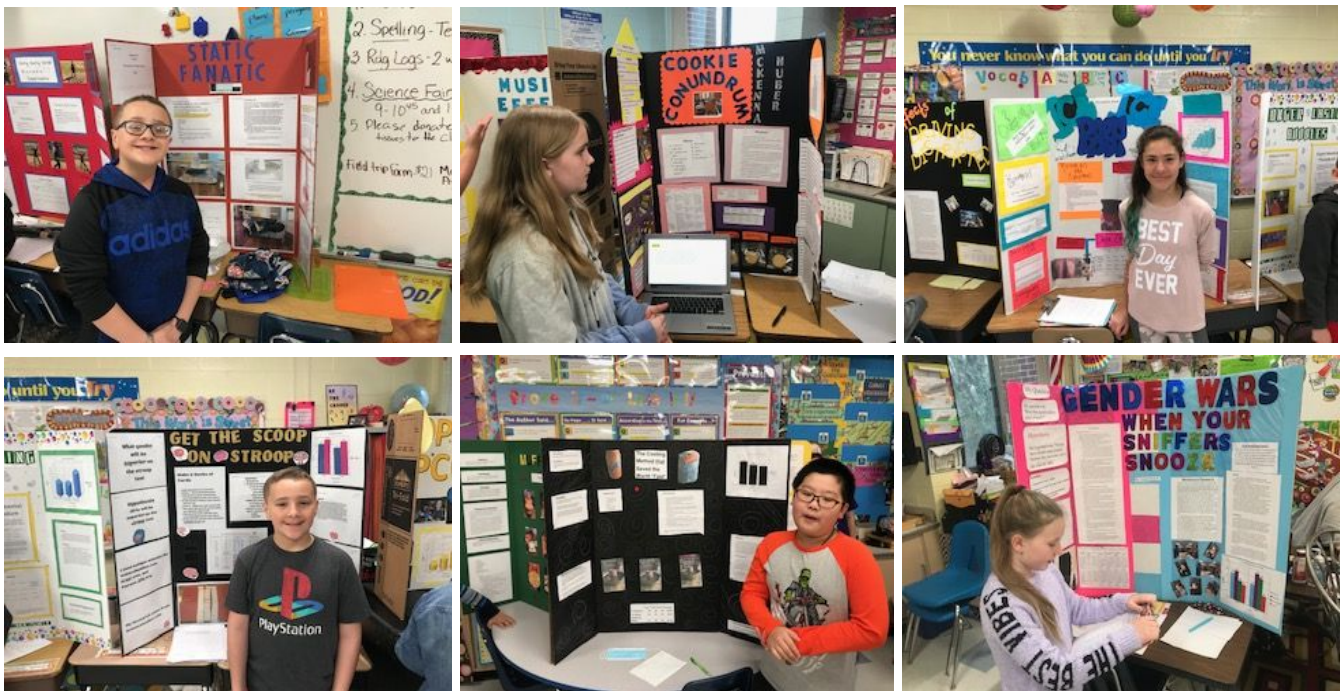
In partnership,

Lori Delbuono Bartlett, Board of Education Chairman

Tony Gasper, Ed.D., Superintendent of Schools

Assistant Superintendent:

Update on Science Curriculum and the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS). Released in 2013 and adopted by the State of Connecticut in 2015, the Next Generation Science Standards set new benchmarks for what student should be able to know, do, and understand in science classes as they progress through each grade level. The standards call for an increased focus on the connections between Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) while placing greater attention on developing the critical thinking and problem-solving skills necessary for success in many 21st century careers. Wolcott is in the second year of a three year roll-out of NGSS. This year, we finalized revisions to our science curriculum in grades 5-10 to align with the standards. Next year, we will complete the integration of the standards into the curriculum with revision work in grades K-4 and 11. The three-year roll-out in these targeted grades will help best prepare students for the corresponding NGSS annual assessment beginning in 2019. In cooperation with consultants from the local Regional Educational Support Center (RESC), teachers are being provided with training and support on instructional strategies to support the implementation of the curriculum. This includes strategies for integrating new engineering practices, as well as the use of observable, real-world phenomena to further promote student inquiry and hands-on engagement. Wolcott students will continue to be introduced to the new curriculum through the remainder of the year and students in grades 5, 8 and 11 will participate in the NGSS state assessment this spring. More information about NGSS can be found on the Connecticut State Department of Education Web Page at: <http://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Science/Science-Standards-and-Resources> . The pictures below show 5th-grade students with their projects at the Alcott Science Fair this month.



Contact Frank Purcaro, Assistant Superintendent: fpurcaro@wolcottps.org

Alcott School:

Happy Spring!

On Tuesday, April 2nd we held a Ned's mindset assembly that focused on growth mindset. This is a pay it forward program that is free of charge to the school. Funds from a sale of Yo-Yo's after the event are used to support the program going to other schools. During the assembly Ned and his friend Megan took students on a Mindset Mission in which using Yo-Yo tricks, they learned to N- Never give up (understanding the power of yet) E- encourage others (spark courage in other people) D- Do your best (always be learning and growing). It was an inspirational assembly at our students had a blast! Since the event, many students are perfecting their Yo-Yo Skills!

On Saturday, April 6th our PTO sponsored the Alcott Duck Race that was held at Peterson Park. The Duck Race has been a long-standing tradition at Alcott over the years that had recently been on hiatus. We were so happy to bring the Duck Race "quack" this year. Students, staff, and families had a blast! We appreciate all the hard work behind the scenes done by our PTO to make this such a great success. We look forward to holding this event in the years to come!

Finally, it is SBAC testing season for students in grades 3-5 at Alcott School. SBAC stands for Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium. SBAC is a computer adaptive test that is aligned to common core standards which test student's abilities in math, English Language Arts, and science (grade 5 only). Testing will take place when we return from spring break (April 23) and run through the month of May. We ask students to get plenty of rest, have a good breakfast, and to try their best!



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

Frisbie School:

Frisbie School celebrated Autism Awareness month in many ways. Autism bracelets were sold the first week of April to kick off our celebration. During morning announcements, facts were presented about autism and how to be a kind friend to everyone. Colorful posters designed by students hang in our hallways to continue to spread awareness. Amy D'Ettore, a special education teacher, talked to third, fourth, and fifth grade teachers about accepting each other's differences and to have a true appreciation for the unique aspects of all people. A big thank you to Wolcott High School's Morgan Mancini, Miss CT Outstanding Teen, for providing information to our fifth grade students about autism and how it affects a student's ability to communicate and interact with others. Each student received a puzzle piece that they decorated to show that we are all diverse and complex in our own way. All of these experiences have helped increase students' understanding of autism and to be accepting of everyone.



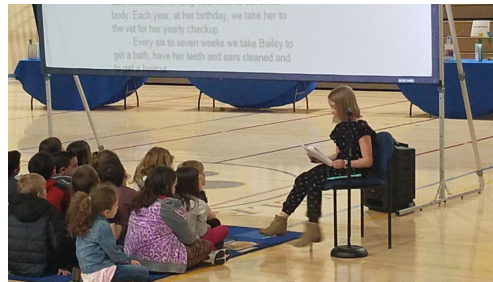
At the beginning of the month, the fifth grade students completed the SBAC science test that provides students with grade-specific question types that vary in difficulty levels with examples of all of the item interaction types. Items engage the student in a grade-appropriate, meaningful scientific activity aligned to a specific Next Generation Science Standards performance expectation. On April 23rd our third, fourth, and fifth grade students began taking the SBAC test that measures student achievement in language arts and mathematics. Using computer adaptive technology, the test is customized for every student so students can show what they know. The results will be sent home to parents in the fall. Please make sure your child gets a good night's rest and eats a healthy breakfast.

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

Wakelee School:

The Wakelee School PTO volunteers worked since February binding books for our annual Young Author's Night. We had an amazing turnout and we had 22 first year authors this year. Young Author books have been written as a long-standing tradition for over 30 years and I am happy to see it continue with the support of families and the PTO.

We also celebrated our students' creative abilities with our annual Art Show. I would like to thank Miss Heyl for preparing the student's artwork and displaying them for all our families to enjoy through a gallery walk. Both events were well attended by Wakelee families, thank you for making this night special for our students!



Students in grades 3-5 have begun taking the SBAC testing. The students will test through the middle of May in small scheduled time slots. The test is adaptive and the results will be reported out next school year. It is important for students to get plenty of rest and a good breakfast to be able to put forth their best effort.

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

Tyrrell Middle School:

Grade 6 students spent portions of the past week participating in an interactive challenge which required the utilization of engineering methods to gather and analyze weather data to solve real-world problems. This series of learning activities were inspired by a National Geographic interactive challenge. Students were required to research and plot several of history's most severe blizzards, hurricanes, and tornadoes that have impacted the United States. Students utilized virtual reality technology to explore hurricanes and tornadoes in greater depth. One of the requirements associated with this multi-day learning activity was to have students write a narrative piece from the perspective of a storm chaser or victim of a severe weather event.



Grade 7 students recently participated in Greek Day, which is an interdisciplinary academic day that focuses on integrating S.T.E.M. (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) with social studies courses, specifically, the study of ancient Greece. Students worked collaboratively to design, build, and test their creations using a set of specific requirements. Students then viewed a participatory performance piece called *Chariot of the Sun* by Jeff Benoit that focused on Odysseus, the Cyclops, and Pandora's Box. The day culminated with special activities that were modeled after the original Greek Olympic games which provided students with physical, mental, and team building challenges.

To prepare for our Holocaust unit, students on the Grade 8 Pearl team completed a gallery walk that included seven stations. These stations were designed to promote student thinking about this tragic historical event. Students browsed maps of concentration camps, photos, and excerpts from diaries. As a culminating activity, students were asked to think of a word or phrase that resonates with them after reading and observing all of the information. With the help of Mr. Kelsey, the students created a Graffiti Wall expressing these emotions and thoughts. The teachers are very pleased regarding the results thus far.



The Grade 8 Onyx team recently completed their Shakespearean unit which focused on "The Merchant of Venice." Students focused on character analysis and development. Sample learning activities included analysis of character and motivation through video excerpts, citation of textual evidence to support analysis, text-dependent analysis of character motivation, and creation of a song or limerick to demonstrate accurate character analysis. Finally, students explored how certain stereotypes can cloud another's judgment by comparing their own life experiences to the situations the characters in "The Merchant of Venice" face.

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

Wolcott High School:

The National Honor Society induction took place on April 9th. We are very proud to announce that 46 new students were inducted into the society. Congratulations to all of the students for excelling in scholarship and leadership within the school and the community.

On April 11th, the Relay for Life team hosted a very successful Lip Sync contest and raised almost \$450.00 for the American Cancer Society.



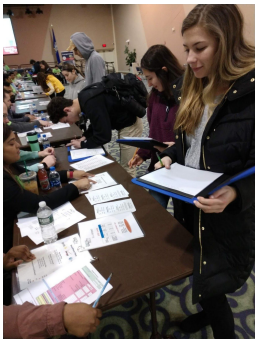
On April 25th, we had a combined induction for Science National Honor Society, Art National Honor Society, French National Honor Society, Spanish National Honor Society and the Social Studies National Honor Society. It was an exciting night where over 100 students were honored for excelling in these special academic fields.

As the weather gets nicer, students have had numerous opportunities to attend many educational field trips.

One recent trip was a visit to The Connecticut Science Center to view Real Bodies: The Exhibition. The nursing students were able to view real human specimens to explore the complex inner workings of the human form in a refreshing and thought-provoking style.



On April 23rd, twenty-five criminology students toured the Garner Correctional Institution in Newtown, Connecticut. The criminology students were able to compare what they learn in class about the state's prison systems with the actual reality. They were able to observe the daily functions of a state prison and interact with correction officers, psychiatrists, and social workers who work in the prison. This allowed students to witness the different careers one can have at a prison and the daily activities of a person who works in a prison. Furthermore, students were able to ask questions to why the inmates in the prison committed their crimes and they were able to observe the physical layout of the prison, the policies of the prison, and the programs the prison has to offer. The students can use all this information to decide if that is a career they would like to go into and then use this information to either write a report on why the criminals in that prison committed their crimes or create a new design for the prison, to reform it for the 21st century.



Students from many different classes got to go to CCSU to experience a Financial Reality Fair, which is a 2.5-hour hands-on experience in which students had a unique opportunity to experience some of the financial challenges they will face when starting a career and life on their own. Budgeting for real life was an eye-opening experience for many.



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

Student Services:

Students from Janet Discepolo's Project Explore program, representing all three district elementary schools, participated in a field trip to Mystic Aquarium on April 5th. The students visited the classroom setting in the Milne Ocean Science and Conservation Center to learn about squid. During this lesson, they examined the characteristics of these invertebrates including the external and internal anatomy and actually had an opportunity to dissect a squid!

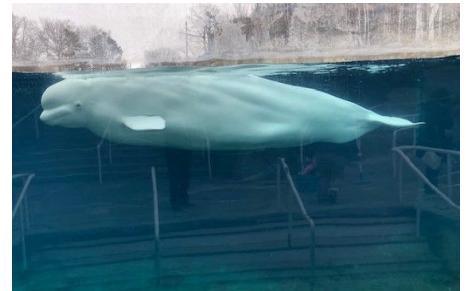


Learners also enjoyed a unique and wonderful show with the Aquarium's resident California sea lions which was a favorite of all. The sea lion show is a truly one-of-a-kind opportunity to experience lions of the sea close up and in action performing!

Students enjoyed the many touch tanks and were able to touch and pet sharks and rays! In addition, they had a great time watching and learning about the magnificent beluga whales and their variety of vocalizations used for communication.



The classes also visited the penguin pavilion and gained a deeper understanding of the concerns facing the endangered African penguins. They learned that their population size has decreased 90% over the past 60 years with numbers falling to around 60,000 birds in the wild.



Along with Mystic Aquarium staff members, they examined and discussed the various threats to the penguins which include oil spills, overfishing of surrounding waters and changes in the environment, such as loss of habitat and global-warming-induced shifts in water currents and atmospheric conditions.



It was a great opportunity for all to engage in the many learning activities which included investigating the delicate balance between the Earth's natural resources and the effects between humans and sea life.

Contact Khollis@wolcottps.org

Business & Operations:



Wolcott School Lunch Program

We understand that every parent has enough to worry about; staying on top of their student's school lunch accounts should be simple. To assist in keeping track and paying for your child's account we have MyPaymentsPlus, an online website for parents to pay for their child's school meals using a credit or debit card. MyPaymentsPlus allows you to pay for meals, view cafeteria purchases, receive low balance alerts, or enroll in autopay. Parents are able to create a free account at: www.MyPaymentsPlus.com. Cashiers still accept cash or checks before school at breakfast and during lunch time if the online option is not for you.

Obtaining a free parent account will give you 24/7 access to information such as the balance in your student's school meal account and record of what they have purchased in the cafeteria.

Once your account is created, you can take advantage of other free benefits of the site, such as low-balance e-mail notifications and even the ability to download the free MyPaymentsPlus mobile app, which is available for all iOS (iPhone/iPad) and Android devices. The mobile app will also allow you to set up push notifications regarding your student's balance. For a small fee, through MyPaymentsPlus, you are able to deposit funds directly into your student's cafeteria account. Deposits can take place both on the MyPaymentsPlus website and via the mobile app. There is also the ability for auto-payments as well. The system also allows you to set the parameters for when you would like an auto-payment to take place. The MyPaymentsPlus Support Team can be reached Monday-Friday, 7:30-5:30 EST at: (877) 237-0946 or via email at: support@mypaymentsplus.com, if you require assistance. If you have any questions or need assistance with your child's PIN number contact:



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