



WPS Update

February 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:

School Regionalization:

The Board of Education and Superintendent strongly oppose any state initiative that would force schools to regionalize. Our school system is one of the most efficient and effective in the state and there is no evidence that regionalizing with neighboring school districts would improve outcomes or the educational experience for Wolcott's children. There is also no evidence that it would save taxpayer money. Most people outside of the profession of public education assume that there must be efficiencies to be found but, sincerely, there is not....not in our case, at least. Wolcott remains one of the lowest-funded school districts in the state on a per-student basis but yet we continue to show strong results and continual growth over time. Our school system has the second-highest return on investment of all districts in the state. In Wolcott Public Schools, there is no fat to be cut...no low-hanging fruit to be found that would improve our efficiency or students' school experience. The Board of Education and Superintendent have both submitted written testimony to the Education Committee of the General Assembly. Our written testimony can be found on the following pages.

How Wolcott Public Schools Rank Statewide:

Dollars per Student Budgeted for Education	District-wide Performance (CSDE Accountability Index)	Return on Investment: (Comparing per-Student Spending to Performance)
156 th out of 166	25 th out of 166	2 nd out of 166

In partnership,

Lori Delbuono Bartlett, Board of Education Chairman

Tony Gasper, Ed.D., Superintendent of Schools



Wolcott Public Schools

1488 Woodtick Road • Wolcott, Connecticut 06716
Telephone 203-879-8183 • Fax 203-879-8182

Superintendent of Schools
Anthony J. Gasper, Ed.D.

Assistant Superintendent
Frank Purcaro



Business Manager
Todd W. Bendtsen, C.P.A.

Director of Student Services & Alt. Programs
Kevin Hollis

A Letter of Testimony to the Education Committee of the Connecticut General Assembly Regarding School District Efficiencies and Regionalism Wolcott Board of Education

February 27, 2019

Distinguished Members of the Education Committee:

We, the duly elected members of the Wolcott Board of Education, wish to strongly express our opposition to forced regionalization of school districts as recently proposed in the legislature and by Governor Lamont. As a panel of volunteer elected officials charged with the governance of an efficient and effective school district, we find these and any such proposals to be an affront to the philosophy of local control; upon which our state's constitution is based.

We dedicate hundreds of hours each year in our quest to ensure that Wolcott's children benefit from Wolcott's schools in ways that are meaningful and right for our local community. Financial and student performance data verify that our school system is highly effective and also one of the most efficient. We see no potential benefit for the students of Wolcott in any forced conjoining with bordering municipalities.

Whether local residents choose to maintain small or large school systems has no bearing on the state legislature's investment in education via the Education Cost Share grant. Whether local residents choose to invest more or less money in their school systems should be left up to municipal governments. State government should not meddle in affairs that do not impact the state budget. Please support our viewpoint and oppose any and all efforts for forced school regionalization.

Respectfully submitted,

Members of the Wolcott Board of Education

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A Letter of Testimony to the Education Committee of the Connecticut General Assembly Regarding School District Efficiencies and Regionalism

March 1, 2019

Distinguished Members of the Education Committee:

The purpose of my testimony today is to provide you with firsthand perspective and knowledge on the currently strong levels of efficiency and effectiveness of Connecticut school districts and to illuminate the ways in which greater size does not correlate with greater effectiveness. As a Connecticut public school superintendent, I am intimately aware and reminded daily of the financial pressures that are currently upon all areas of the public sector in our state.

In preparing my budget proposal for our Board of Education and Town Council, I look for objective, quantitative ways to show that Wolcott residents' hard-earned tax dollars are being used wisely by our school system. One of the ways in which I do this is by calculating a Return on Investment (ROI) statistic. Using publicly available data, I compare each Connecticut town's per-student spending with the percentage of students who are meeting grade-level targets on mandatory state testing for English/Language Arts. Dividing the first statistic by the second gives a general picture of the efficiency with which a school district addresses the needs of its students. In studying this data, you will note that the size of a district or municipality seems to have little bearing on its ROI. In other words, these data reveal that a school district's size has no demonstrable relationship to its efficiency. You will also note that districts with comparable ROI can have very different demographic characteristics.

The five districts with the strongest ROI are shown below. Note that all of these districts would fall below one proposed regionalization threshold of 40,000 residents and most are just above another proposal's threshold of 2,000 students.

School District	Per Pupil Budget	ELA Score %	ROI: \$ / %	ROI Rank	Municipal Population	School Population
Ellington	\$ 13,731.79	70.0	\$ 196.17	1	15,916	2,724
Rocky Hill	\$ 15,223.37	77.5	\$ 196.43	2	20,021	2,839
Wolcott	\$ 14,104.66	71.1	\$ 198.38	3	16,673	2,470
Trumbull	\$ 16,108.32	81.0	\$ 198.87	4	36,628	6,544
North Stonington	\$ 15,711.20	78.2	\$ 200.91	5	5,256	772

Throughout the rest of the ROI ranking, one can readily see multiple occurrences that show that size of a school system does not predict its level of efficiency or effectiveness. Districts with similar ROI can be seen to have very different municipal and school population numbers.

School District	Per Pupil Budget	ELA Score %	ROI: \$ / %	ROI Rank	Municipal Population	School Population
Stratford	\$ 16,025.82	48.7	\$ 329.07	120	52,609	7,091
Scotland	\$ 22,296.33	67.3	\$ 331.30	121	1,686	205
Westbrook	\$ 24,131.41	72.6	\$ 332.39	122	6,902	739

Additionally, the demographic and economic characteristics of a school system do not seem to be reliable predictors of ROI.

School District	Per Pupil Budget	ELA Score %	ROI: \$ / %	ROI Rank	Municipal Population	School Population
Danbury	\$ 12,899.45	46.4	\$ 278.01	85	84,657	11,266
Barkhamsted	\$ 17,887.32	64.1	\$ 279.05	86	3,685	534
Groton	\$ 16,222.21	58.1	\$ 279.21	87	39,692	4,768

Given this evidence showing little-to-no correlation between a school district's size and its efficiency or effectiveness, I strongly encourage the members of the committee to question the notion that larger school districts are automatically more efficient and to oppose measures in the Governor's budget that assume so.

Respectfully submitted,

Anthony J. Gasper, Ed.D.

Superintendent, Wolcott Public Schools

Sources:

- Connecticut EdSight: Interactive Data Portal. <http://edsight.ct.gov/SASPortal/main.do>
- Connecticut State Department of Education: Bureau of Fiscal Statistics
- Connecticut State Department of Education: Division of Finance and Internal Operations

Alcott School:

Things continue to roll along at Alcott School. On Thursday, February 14th through the generosity of the Alcott PTO, students and staff were treated to an assembly by world renowned Jump Rope Master, Peter Nestler. To date Peter holds 12 Guinness World records. Some of these include fastest mile while skipping rope on one foot, most skips on a pogo stick in one minute, and most underwater skips in one hour, to name a few. The students were taught about hard work, perseverance, and what it takes to achieve your dreams and aspirations through his story. Throughout the presentation Peter did amazing tricks, such as jump roping while seated, jump roping on a unicycle, jump roping while juggling a soccer ball, and jump roping with the students (and principal). We all had a blast, and learned some valuable lessons.

During this assembly we also held our monthly community giveback, donating a dollar or more to wear something “heart themed, red, or pink”. With the funds raised, Alcott made a \$300.00 donation to the Children’s Heart Association/American Heart Association. The giveback was inspired by 5th grader, Lilly. She has a younger brother that will attend Alcott, who was born with a Congenital Heart Defect. Great job!

Finally, congratulations are in order for two 5th grade students at Alcott, Shania and Mia. Both were recognized this month a by the Connecticut Association of Schools at the Celebration of the Arts Banquet at the Aqua Turf in Southington. Students throughout the state were honored for excellence in Art and Music. Congratulations and what an awesome way to represent Alcott School!



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

Frisbie School:

There have been filled with many opportunities for students to showcase their good character. Our Frisbie community participated in The Great Kindness Challenge during the week of January 28th. The Great Kindness Challenge is one week of proactive and positive bullying prevention initiative that improves school climate and increases student engagement. The student council members designed a bingo board that challenged students to participate in various acts of kindness from picking up the trash for others to reading to someone at home throughout the week. They also added a heart to our Being Kind Bulletin Board that explained how they are kind Frisbie School students. Also as part of the challenge, the Frisbie Student Council collected over 600 gently used books to donate to the Wolcott Public Library and collected over 500 items for the St. Vincent DePaul Homeless Shelter. During the week, students read a kindness

quote for them to think about and students had focused on different ways they could be kind in school. Kindness Week culminated with an assembly on February 1st recognizing over 20 organizations in town for helping our Frisbie community. During this student run assembly, members of the community were thanked by Frisbie students for their many acts of kindness from volunteering in our school, providing money for various curricular projects to protecting our school community. Each organization was called up to be recognized for their generosity and given cookies as a token of our thanks for all they do for Frisbie.

Two of our Frisbie students were recognized at the CAS Arts Awards banquet for their excellence in art and music. Congratulations to Siana Adili and Emelie Pacheco for their outstanding achievement in the arts.



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

Wakelee School:

We had an amazing visit from Renata Bowers, author of the Frieda B. series of children's books.

During the school day, she led a Writers Workshop for each grade, designed to inspire students while they're in the beginning stages of creating their own published books. In the evening, she led a Family Night at Wakelee, providing insight to what students explored during the Writers Workshops, and sharing with families tips and guidance for encouraging their children through the writing and publishing process. As a rare treat, during Family Night, Bowers shared on the big screen a full read-through of her



sixth Frieda B. book, scheduled to release on February 24th, titled *Frieda B. Knows It's True... You Are Free to Be YOU*.

I would like to congratulate Oliwier Krzyzewski and Taylor Schepis who were both honored at the annual CAS Elementary School Celebration of the Arts. They were nominated by Mr. Fontaine and Miss Heyl for their exemplary effort and positive mindset!

The fifth grade students held their Science Showcase this month. Students completed research, made a hypothesis, and then conducted the trials to test their theory. The students then presented their boards to family and friends.



Our fourth grade students held their Invention Convention. All students were very creative in their inventions, coming up with solutions to real world problems. Wakelee has seven students moving on to the State Invention Convention to be held in May. Congratulations to all our students for a job well done.

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

Tyrrell Middle School:



Recently, Grade 7 students took a “tour of Egypt” in our media center. Students rotated through a variety of stations in which they were required to analyze various primary and secondary sources as a means to build background information on ancient Egyptian archeological sites. These included the Great Pyramid of Giza, Abu Simbel, the Luxor Temple, and many other sites. Students extrapolated information from various sources about the different interactive exhibits using Virtual Reality and Google Cardboard. Independent research was completed on these Egyptian archaeological sites as students explored various components of Egyptian history as it was brought to life through integration of various technology components.

On Thursday, February 14, three groups of Tyrrell students took a trip to volunteer at various Wolcott locations. One group traveled to Frisbie to read to third grade students as part of their “Read to Your Sweetheart” event. Another group of students helped serve the Valentine Breakfast at the Senior Center and made the centerpieces for the festivities at TMS prior to their visit! The final group brought the approximately 600 pounds of food donations from Tyrrell’s recent food drive to the Wolcott Food Pantry and then worked to sort and organize the donations. The group was then able to go on a tour of the Wolcott Police Department and see how it operates. It was a great morning of connecting with the community!



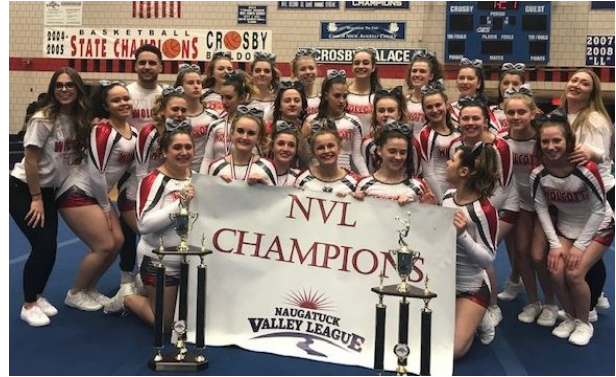
On Thursday, February 21, the members of the Tyrrell Project Explore Program traveled to the Bushnell Theater in Hartford to see the national tour of *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*. Having the chance to attend a live theater performance allowed the students to note various aspects of a live production from lighting, to music, to costumes, and acting. Students study Roald Dahl while at TMS and seeing the stage adaptation of one of his works added another dimension to their learning. The show reminded the audience of the power of imagination and dreaming....a good reminder for all ages!

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

Wolcott High School:

Wolcott High School has earned a spot on the College Board's 9th Annual AP[®] District Honor Roll. The honor roll recognizes school districts in the United States and Canada that have expanded access to Advanced Placement[®] coursework and maintained or increased the percentage of students earning scores of 3 or higher on AP Exams. We are very proud of this accomplishment.

Congratulations goes out to the Wolcott High School Cheerleading team for becoming the 2019 Naugatuck Valley League All-Girl Champions & overall Grand Champions.



Congratulations also go out to the Wolcott Dance Team for coming in 1st place for the Naugatuck Valley League Championship for 2019.



In an amazing display of kindness and strength, our WHS Unified team raised over \$3,000 for the Special Olympics Penguin Plunge!

CAS is hosting the 36th Annual High School Scholar-Athlete Awards Banquet on Sunday, May 5, 2019, at the Aqua Turf Club in Plantsville. This prestigious recognition dinner honors high school seniors who excel academically as well as play a CIAC-sponsored varsity sport. The students selected for this year's banquet are Tyler Shoban and Rachel Bennett. Congratulations to both students for their outstanding efforts.

On Monday, January 28, 2019 at 6:30 the Exchange Club of Wolcott and members of the community gathered to celebrate the Excel Club and the installation of our new members. During the evening's proceedings, new member Makenzie Cossette performed the National Anthem and officers of the club shared their thoughts and the thoughts of the membership in a presentation. Several members from the Exchange Club of Wolcott attended: Mr. Mike DeNegris and Mrs. Annette Petrucci shared remarks; Mr. Joseph Krajewski, CT District Director, Division IV, Exchange Club attended and led the installation ceremony; Mr. Roger Picard photographed the event. Refreshments were provided by CCs Chocolates, La Fortuna Restaurant and WHS Culinary Program.

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

Student Services:



On February 1st the students in the Wolcott High School's Life Skills Resource Room and Boys Lunch Groups collaborated and planned a bowling field trip to Wolcott Lanes. The students in the WHS Life Skills Resource Room worked to create a budget for attending the trip. The students budgeted and assisted in the planning for the cost of bowling and pizza per student. Students also



had the opportunity to practice language and socialization skills in a community setting with their same aged peers.

They were able to purchase food items while staff members and peers provided positive reinforcement and coaching in the moment. In addition, the trip provided the students the opportunity to exhibit appropriate recreational etiquette and social skills. Wolcott Lanes was extremely accommodating and ensured that all students enjoyed their planned leisure activity. Another great way to support our local community businesses!



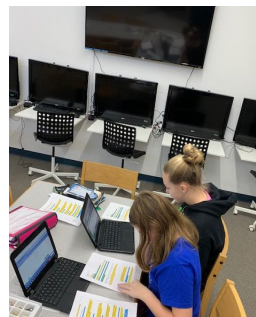
Contact Kevin Hollis, Director of Student Services and Alternative Education: khollis@wolcottps.org

Assistant Superintendent:

Update on Technology Integration: Over the past three years the school library-media centers throughout the district have transformed from solely traditional library-style reading spaces into blended reading spaces and comprehensive technology hubs. These redesigned spaces are being filled with interactive technology, augmented and virtual reality experiences, and high speed internet access. As a result of these changes, teachers representing a variety of academic areas are finding ways to collaborate with the library media specialists to make learning interesting and exciting for their students. For example, students at Tyrrell Middle School have engaged in a wide assortment of project-based assignments while utilizing the new technology and collaborative spaces now present in the school's restructured library media center. Media center specialist Sheila Distasio, classroom assistant Andrea Krug and IT Specialist Erich Urban having been working together throughout the year to find ways to integrate innovative technology into the media center to support teaching and learning. Some examples of the types of projects students in grades 6 through 8 have engaged in using the resources in the media center include:

- For ELA: Using Google Earth to view real locations students read about in the text titled, *The Lion of Little Rock*. Students also took a virtual learning journey using the new interactive table to view videos, photos, and listen to audio clips about major figures and events from the Civil Rights Movement.
- For Science: Students in 6th grade classes utilized the interactive table to explore the "rock cycle" as part of their unit on the Earth's Crust.
- For Social Studies: Students used Google Expeditions and the virtual reality headsets to take a virtual tour of Ancient Egypt. Students also created their own virtual tours using these resources.
- For World Language: Students had a media center "takeover" to celebrate Spanish culture and explore the Mexican Día de Muertos holiday.
- For ELA: Students in 7th grade wrote and recorded their own original Podcasts.

Below are pictures of students engaged in the aforementioned activities:



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

Business & Operations:

Facility Upgrades



Recently, the Town Building Committee in conjunction with the schools oversaw the replacement of our elementary school oil tanks and new boilers at Tyrrell Middle.

New double wall fiberglass tanks were installed to replace the thirty-year-old underground tanks. These new tanks were installed with a new electronic gauge that also seconds as an alarm monitor, alerting the staff if the tank is overfilled or leaking. These environmentally friendly tanks will last for another thirty years.

The three new efficient gas boilers installed at Tyrrell appear to be heating the building at a much lower overall cost than the old oil fired burners. This project was part of Wolcott Public School's goal of reducing our energy consumption and reducing those associated costs.



Contact: Wayne Natzel, Facilities Director: wnatzel@wolcottps.org
Todd Bendtsen, Business Manager: tbendtsen@wolcottps.org