



WPS Update

March 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:

The Board of Education has approved a requested budget for the 2019-2020 school year. We want all Wolcott residents to know the depth of thought and planning that go into each year’s budget. This year’s process began in early December when we started to predict our contractual cost changes. This includes looking at employment contracts, utilities, special education programming, transportation, and health benefits. Simultaneously, school principals and district department leaders begin devising their budgets. All of these budgets are constructed in a three-tier priority system. In a new part of the process this year, the Board was engaged early on in hearing from all schools and programs about strategic projects that would help to bring our district-wide Vision of the Graduate to fruition. Through this process, critical needs and improvements were identified and included in the Board’s budget request. Of particular note, are two-and-a-half positions that we feel are critical to serving Wolcott children:



- An additional school psychologist: In line with state and national trends for adolescents, our schools are experiencing a surge in the number of students whose education and lives are being interrupted by stress, anxiety disorders, clinical depression, and other real mental health concerns. These observations are verified by the yearly survey conducted by our staff of all grade 9 students. Our schools frequently support students in emotional or mental health crisis.
- A teacher of English to speakers of other languages: While our overall student population continues to slowly decline, the number of students in need of support to learn English is steadily increasing. As of today, Wolcott Public Schools has 67 students who are legally classified as English Learners. It's important for the public to understand that this designation is similar in some ways to special education in that all school districts are legally required and held accountable for providing services to these students based on a standardized test called LAS Links. In the recent past, we have called on the talents of our reading specialists and other teachers to provide these legally-mandated services but doing so takes critical time away from other students. Providing a TESOL teacher district-wide will better serve our English Learners and will also let our other teachers better focus on all students in need of academic supports.
- A half-time content coach: We continue to work as quickly and thoughtfully as possible to bring our curriculum documents up to date. This work is overseen by Mr. Purcaro and has been contributed to by many teachers from across the district each year. However, in a recent report from the New England Association of Schools and Colleges regarding the high school's accreditation, a need for more work in this area was highlighted. While it would be easy to justify the need for multiple full-time professionals to complete this work, we know the pressures to keep our budget as lean as possible. Thus, we support the addition of a half-time content coach to work with teachers and administrators in the area of mathematics curriculum and instruction.

We hope that the parents, residents, and Town Council of Wolcott will agree with us in seeing that these improvements are needed in order to continue our school district's positive growth.

In partnership,

Lori Delbuono Bartlett, Board of Education Chairman

Tony Gasper, Ed.D., Superintendent of Schools

Assistant Superintendent:

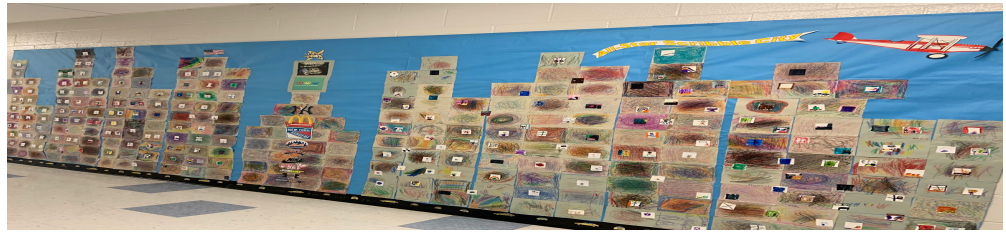
Invention Convention: Many exciting and innovative learning activities continue to take place in each of the schools this spring. One such event held at each of the elementary schools is the annual presentation of student projects for the CT Invention Convention. All fourth grade students participate in the Wolcott Invention Convention which is led by Ms. Janet Discepolo in conjunction with the fourth grade teachers in the district. The preparation for the spring conventions begin in the fall and winter months, as students brainstorm creative solutions to real-world problems. Once a creative solution is identified, students design, test, and build products to address the issue. The results of these experiments are presented to judges in March. As stated on the CT Invention Convention website, <https://www.ctinventionconvention.org/>, a group of student inventors from these “local” conventions are selected to participate in the Connecticut Invention Convention Annual State Final, where they share their inventions with other students throughout the state. A select few will move forward to the National Convention where they have the opportunity to compete against student inventors throughout the country, some of who will be granted patents for their designs. The skills that students learn while participating in Invention Convention include, public speaking, creative problem-solving, and critical thinking all of which are emphasized in the Wolcott Public School’s Vision of a Graduate document. The design and engineering aspects of Invention Convention also align with recent changes in the district’s science curriculum as we transition to the Next Generation Science Standards.

Below are pictures of students delivering their presentations at the Frisbie School Invention Convention on Friday, March 22:



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

Alcott School:



A lot of exciting things have been going on at Alcott. On Friday, March 1st we kicked off our annual One School One Book initiative. Over the next several weeks, all Alcott students will be reading *The Cricket in Times Square* by George Selden. We were joined by News Channel 8, CT Style host, Ryan Kristapher and News12 CT reporter (and Wolcott native) Alexa Farrell. Both Ryan and Alexa spoke about why reading was important to them. They visited classrooms and helped to create our Alcott Scribble City Skyline. Ryan also read Chapter 1 of the book to the whole school! What a great way to celebrate reading!

To start the month of March, we held the first ever combined band concert at Tyrrell Middle School with select students from the Alcott, Frisbie, and Wakelee bands. The students did an excellent job and sounded amazing together! A big "THANK YOU" is in order for Mrs. Goldberg, Mr. Fontaine, and Mrs. Deloy for spearheading the effort. It was great preview of how the TMS band will sound in the future!

Finally, congratulations are in order for our 4th grade students who presented their Invention Convention inventions on Friday, March 8th. There were many original and creative inventions. Three students from Alcott will go on to the state level competition at UCONN. Cameron with the *HIT* helmet (helmet intermission transmitter). Emersyn with her hands free invention, *Phone On the Go* and Mia with her *Positisues* (tissues with words of encouragement for when you are sick). Great job and good luck as you move on!



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

Frisbie School:

Team building has been an initiative this year at Frisbie School. With more students on their devices, students are not communicating as frequently with each other. To address this, our school has made the social and emotional wellbeing of our students a top priority. Recently, our school purchased a Breakout Edu Kit to work on collaboration, cooperation, creativity, and critical thinking. This kit comes with a collection of resettable locks, boxes, and items that can be used to play immersive learning games. With the purchase of a kit, teachers have access to games on more than 700 academic topics. Each classroom teacher has used the kit to transfer learning into the classroom while also working on how to communicate with one another towards one common goal. The students unravel the clues to solve a puzzle and then use the solution to unlock the clues to another task. This engaging technology helps students to think outside of the box. It has been a hit with students and staff!



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

Wakelee School:

On March 1st Wakelee School invited many guest readers as a culminating event to our Dr. Seuss Read Across America celebration week. We celebrated through the week with different themed days. It was an amazing opportunity to celebrate such a well known author and the great fun of reading! I would like to thank our guest readers for coming and sharing a great book. Representative Mastrofrancesco read to our second grade classes.



The Wakelee School Band Ensemble held it's winter concert on March 20th. The students did an amazing job! I would like to thank Mr. Fontaine for his time working individually with students and then putting it all together for a group performance. I encourage the students to continue to pursue opportunities in the arts!



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



Tyrrell Middle School:

On March 1st, Tyrrell Middle School held our first annual Digital Learning Day. This student run event was spearheaded by Grade 6 social studies teacher Mrs. Wright. The program was designed in an effort to have students share their expertise and have students teach teachers how to effectively use certain software and technologies to enhance teaching and learning at Tyrrell. Stations included: 3D printing, Google Slides, multimedia projects for students, Google Expeditions, coding using Scratch, and digital assessment and study tools. Teacher feedback has been very positive regarding skills and knowledge acquired from student presenters. We are hopeful that this will become an annual event at Tyrrell!



The Engineers Teaching Math program visited Tyrrell Middle School and conducted three workshops with Project Explore students. This program is designed to provide students with an engaging hands on experience with activities that are challenging and provide real world relevance. These workshops are inquiry based and conducted in the spirit that a wrong answer is better than no answer and that persistence and imagination are integral problem solving skills. Our students were presented with the dilemma of an intersection and given the volume of traffic that passed through. They then had to determine the cycle that the traffic lights should follow in the 90 second cycle to keep traffic moving in a safe and efficient manner. The real-life application of algebra and seeing the students realize that they were utilizing algebraic reasoning that also serves as engineering was exciting to see. We hope to be able to offer similar programs to our students in the future.



Last year, you may remember that we participated in the Campaign to End The R Word. This year we have decided to participate in a similar school-wide initiative, but this time with a slightly different focus. We are currently carrying out a campaign to foster inclusion. This month Discovery meetings focused on the topic of inclusion and developing strategies in which we can collectively, as a school, make all students feel accepted and included in our school community. Moving forward students will be participating in a variety of activities designed to raise student awareness on the topic and to make progress in the area of inclusion.



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

Wolcott High School:

On April 9th, our Juniors will all be sitting for the SAT School Day Assessment. This is an important test as it provides valuable information related to our students' college readiness. All students are strongly encouraged to utilize their College Board and Khan Academy online accounts to help them prepare for this test. In October all of our students took the PSAT. Those scores are linked to practice problems on each individual's account that will allow students to practice on areas of weakness.

During the month of March the School Counseling Department provided the Junior Class with a plethora of activities and events to help them prepare for life after high school. Each week during Discovery the students participated in a lesson, activity, or game that focused on post high school planning. Counselors also be met with every junior individually for their Junior meeting to discuss post high school options.

Congratulations to the Wolcott High School Robotics team. They recently competed with over 40 teams from all over New England and won the top award, qualifying them for the New England Championships.



WHS art students attended a field trip and exercised critical thinking skills in a gallery session led by docent Taka Washita at the Wadsworth Atheneum in Hartford. The discussion theme centered on the cultural and aesthetic developments that led to change from the Impressionists through major movements in the 20th century.

On Saturday, March 9th, three students (Julia Hynek, Caidan Pilarski, and Emily Tricarico) attended the CT Junior Science and Humanities Symposium at UConn Health Center, in Farmington, CT. The students listened to the keynote speaker, Olga Ancuzkow, Ph.D., participated in several workshops throughout the day, and listened to several peers present their research on innovations in health and technology.



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

Student Services:



Recently, the Unified Sports team took the plunge to benefit Special Olympics Connecticut and our Wolcott High School soccer and basketball Unified Sports teams. Over \$3,000 was raised and the funds will be shared with half of the proceeds benefiting Special Olympics Connecticut and half being donated to the Wolcott High School's Unified Sports program.

The Unified Sports Team is a sports team created through Special Olympics Connecticut in partnership with the Connecticut Interscholastic Athletic Conference (CIAC). The team allows school children the opportunity to participate in organized team sports, build friendships

with their peers, and help inspire a school environment with acceptance and respect. For more info visit ciacsports.com. Sixteen partners and one athlete along with their coaches jumped head first into the ice cold water at Winding Trails in Farmington, CT. As they were plunging they noticed at the same time many people were ice fishing! The coaches reported that it was a great team building exercise and warmed their hearts to give back to the community. They plan on taking part of the Penguin Plunge for years to come.



Contact Khollis@wolcottps.org

Business & Operations:



The Wolcott Latchkey Program

The Wolcott Latchkey Program is a before and after school child care program within our Elementary Schools. Our normal hours operate 7am through 8:30am and 3:15pm through 6:00pm. New Registration opens on April 1, 2019. Registration packets are available for pick up at the Elementary Schools Cafeteria during Latchkey hours. There will also be registration packets available at the Assistant Superintendents office, located at Alcott Elementary School. If you pick up a packet in the Assistant Superintendents Office, please be sure to choose the packet titled with your specific school's name on the front. The first page of the registration packet provides information where to mail the completed document if you choose not to return it during Latchkey hours.

Students who attend the program enjoy many forms of entertainment and as well as opportunities for enrichment. Each day there is allotted homework time, students participate in craft projects, holiday parties, games, outdoor play time, and many other supervised activities throughout the school year. If you register for the Wolcott Latchkey Program, we look forward to meeting you and your family.

If you have any questions, you may contact:

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