



An informational update from the Superintendent to the RSD 17 Board.

November 2023

Superintendent's Report, Jeffrey S. Wihbey, Superintendent of Schools



Messages from the Superintendent

Achievement:

Burr Elementary School was named a School of Distinction for the second consecutive year by the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE). Killingworth Elementary School achieved a School Performance Index (SPI) of 100 again this year. HKIS made significant growth improvement over last year as well.

HKHS SAT English Language Arts achievement was ranked as the 10th highest high school in Connecticut.

Grant Won:

RSD 17 was awarded the High-Intensity Tutoring Grant from the CSDE. RSD17 was one of 44 districts that received a grant from CSDE for a High Dosage Tutoring Program. The grant is for \$54,800 and is intended to boost student growth in mathematics in grades 6-9. RSD17 will be able to support 20 students at HKMS and 20 students at HKHS with math tutoring due to these funds. (Governor Lamont's [Press Release](#))

SPED Program Review

Regional School District 17 will partner with New Solutions K12 (NSK12) for our program review. Through this partnership, we will work to improve the effectiveness, cost-effectiveness, and equity of serving students with special needs and other students who struggle. The work will focus on academics and behavior support. We've taken many steps to implement these best practices already as a district, and this work will allow us to finetune these ongoing efforts.

WHY?

Given the impact of the pandemic and disrupted learning, now is a great time to take a fresh look at how to support struggling students. The purpose of this work is to identify opportunities the district can pursue to continue to raise the achievement of students who struggle while also making the work more rewarding and sustainable for staff. While we are proud of the quality of services provided to students with disabilities and the hard work of our staff, who help all children achieve at high levels, ever-higher expectations and the impact of the ongoing pandemic require us to look for ways to further improve student learning and the way we deliver services to our students. This work will also serve as an important element of our commitment to improving equity in our district.



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HOW?

The NSK12 team will conduct a systematic study to review our current regular and special education services, including our integration of special education with MTSS (Multi-Tiered System of Supports), as well as programs, procedures, and staffing for serving students who struggle. This study will include the examination of in-district and benchmark data as well as significant data-gathering efforts, including conducting focus groups, stakeholder interviews, and classroom observations.

The result of this work will be a better picture of what is working well in the district, where there is an opportunity for potential improvements to the delivery of services to students and parents, and how the district can better utilize our resources.

WHEN?

The work kicks off this fall and will run through February 2024.

We are excited to be undertaking this study and appreciate your support in this process. I hope you are as excited as I am to begin this work that will benefit both students and staff. We will be in touch soon about ways you can get involved.

I have included my [FAQ memo](#) to the Board of Education and our administrative team that might more thoroughly answer your questions. For more information, please contact me at your convenience.

Department Updates

Transportation

- If there are no future changes to the E.H. Swing Bridge Rehab project, then the 11/12-11/15 bridge closure should be the last 63-hour closure for 2023.

Facilities

- A space waiver letter was resubmitted to the State for the Photovoltaic project in early October, and the State has accepted the request with a preliminary amount of \$436K.
- We have a rating for each school through the Rubric created by the Facilities team as part of the SOP that will be presented with the Capital request list at the Facilities subcommittee meeting on November 28th.



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- We had a fast-paced repair on the track to take advantage of the remaining warmer weather to be ready for the Track and Field season in the spring.

Food Services

- The Food Service Department received a Supply Chain Assistance Grant of \$44,289.26.
- Students in October enjoyed a fresh kale salad with fresh garlic purchased from a farm in East Haddam.

Fiscal

- Auditors returned at the end of October for the annual audit process, with a December 31, 2023, completion date still in sight.

Talent, Accountability, & Human Resources

- Beginning of the Year conferences for certified evaluation are underway. Staff is utilizing the new Professional Growth online application for forms.
- Negotiations for a new HKEA Collective Bargaining Agreement have begun.
- Teacher feedback is being collected through the District Wide Data Team to monitor the impact of Professional Learning on teachers' practice.

Student Services

- The Social Worker, through the School Mental Health grant, is supporting the secondary levels with student attendance.

Curriculum Office

- HKHS received a Perkins V grant for \$19,502 for the 23-24 school year. The tech education department intends to purchase items such as equipment like a rolling toolbox, belt sander, scroll saw, vacuum table, vacuum pump, and ice machine for food. We are proposing professional development for new tools and conferences and transportation funds for student field trips to manufacturing facilities in Connecticut.
- Jenn Beermuender, Superintendent Wihbey, and Judy Nacca defended our reading waiver to the State Department of Education on 10/26. We will hear back by December 1st.
- Curriculum Coordinators filed the Title I, II, and IV grants with the CSDE. These grants support portions of salaries for interventionists, professional development for educators, and personalized learning pathways for students.

Schools

HKHS

- Congratulations to Liza Murphy, who was identified by the College Board as a commended student on the 2022 PSAT! Commended students scored in the top 50,000 nationwide of all test takers.



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- HKHS will collaborate with Morgan High School and Lyme Old Lyme High School to participate in an exchange with a high school in France, with families from all three schools opening their homes to guests from the sending school. Five HK families will serve as hosts, and their guest students will attend HKHS for the week and participate in whole-group cultural events with the Morgan and LOL students. We are excited to strengthen both the language and cultural learning aspects of our program through this first-time collaborative endeavor with neighboring schools.
- HKHS is proud to share that, once again, both boys and girls Cross Country teams have won the Shoreline Championship!
- HKHS is so proud of our very own Saige Merwin, a junior at HKHS. Saige has been named to receive the New England Patriots Difference Maker Award for her work to support kids with diabetes Elbowbumpkid Inc. - a name coined during Covid when many of us replaced handshakes with elbow bumps. From the Patriot's press release: "Saige was diagnosed with Type 1 Diabetes as a baby and has been helping others with the disease for many years. Now 16, Saige has talked to many newly diagnosed kids through the years. Saige's tireless advocacy for the insulin bill passed in Connecticut in 2020 saves families thousands of dollars each year and inspires others to advocate to their elected officials." Saige also mentors young people newly diagnosed with the disease and regularly speaks at conferences on that same topic.
- We also celebrate Coach Mark Brookes for receiving the Gold Key Award from the Connecticut Sports Media Alliance. "Coach Brookes has coached the Cougars for 47 years and has won 743 games - the second-highest win total in the history of high school baseball in CT." [from HK Now]

HKMS

- The Middle School Task Force has concluded with five priorities.
 - HKMS is a regional leader in math growth and achievement.
 - HKMS has a schedule that incorporates elements of a continuum of experience through grade level progression, teaming, effective advisory, degree of choice, and exposure to content areas.
 - HKMS has a shared vision that is collaboratively created, connected to the VOG, and known by stakeholders.
 - HKMS has an effective system of addressing SEB needs that includes a whole school structure and individualized support and is implemented with fidelity.
 - HKMS has a protocol for whole school and teacher-level family communication that is timely, responsive, and consistently well-implemented.
- Our first round of athletics and clubs has come to an end, and the next round is getting underway.
- The HKMS Student of the Month program is in its second month. In October, the September student of the month was chosen based on the Cougar core value of responsibility.
- The HKMS Advisory program has been reinstated and will meet every other week.
- HKIMS Veteran's Day program had over 20 veterans participating in an educational program for our students.

HKIS

- At the end of October, Spirit Week was celebrated for the hard work of the students this fall. Monday was designated as "Crazy Hair or Hat Day," where students styled their hair in wild and fun ways. Tuesday



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was “Halloween Spirit Day,” where students showed off their Halloween costumes. Wednesday was “PJ Day,” where students wore their comfiest clothes. Thursday was “School Spirit Day” where students wore their school colors and showed their pride in the school community. Friday was designated “Flannel Friday,” where students wore their favorite fall flannels. It was a fun-filled week that lifted the spirits of students and staff alike.

- 4th and 5th-grade students celebrated Halloween with various activities on October 31st. The PTO put together a fun-filled afternoon of games for the students. The event brought the community together and encouraged friendly competition and socializing.

BES

- Our local volunteer fire department visited students as part of our fire prevention assembly in honor of Fire Safety Month.
- Students also had the opportunity to attend and participate in a cultural arts assembly about the history of acrobatics in China.
- The Parent-Teacher conferences were well attended, and teachers appreciated the opportunity to update parents on their child’s progress this year.
- We also hosted our annual Halloween Parade for students and enjoyed seeing all of the creative costumes that the students wore!

KES

- In addition to the work in the classroom, kindergarten students took a field trip to Rose Orchard Farm, where they had a blast. Picking pumpkins and the hayride were some of their favorite activities.
- The third-grade students partnered with the Killingworth Historical Society and took a trip to Parmelee Farm to learn about the history of Killingworth.
- The annual Costume Parade was a huge success and well attended by our families. The costumes were incredible, both the student costumes and the staff costumes.

Board Requests Follow-Up:

1. **How many students are currently participating in the High School Internship Program? Are there any of the internships paid?**

From Corey Borzain: There are currently three interns placed and are in unpaid positions. They fall under the UELP program (Unpaid Experiential Learning Program). She expects to place four additional unpaid positions in November for the mid-winter session. She recently received permission to do paid internships. The paid ones are very specific. That program is CWE/DO (Corporate Work Education/Diversified Occupations). We do not have any of those at this time.

2. **Follow-up statement on the state legislation vs RSD17 drug policy.**

The Superintendent and Principal Hayward are meeting with Attorney Santiago to ensure alignment between current Board policy and the new CGA statutes around expulsion.



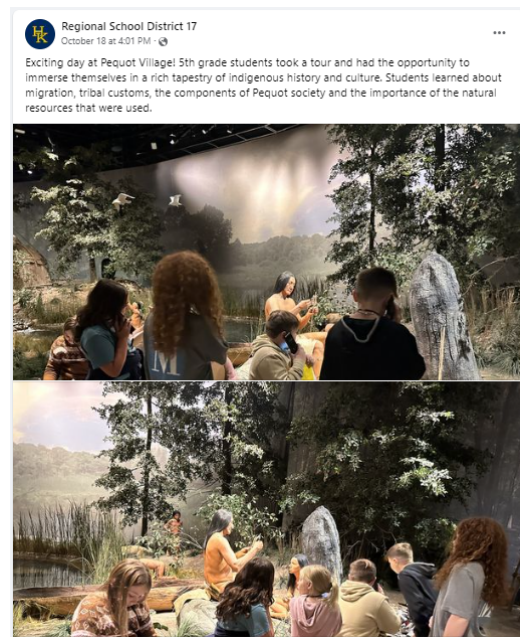
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3. Provide a follow-up explanation on the solar shade project.

From BH: The blinds which were denied during the capital requests were then purchased with operating funds from Burr. We also went with a traditional roller blind instead of a solar shade. Since we were using operating funds, the new quote given to the BOE was for a different scope of work (main office and kindergarten classrooms), which was noted during our walkthrough with SafetyMatters LLC for a safety and security audit as classrooms with high visibility for outsiders looking in and should have blinds/shades of some sort. He recommended that solar shades provide dual purposes (security and thermal benefits).

4.

Social Media Posts:





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Regional School District 17
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Developmental screening for RSD17 Preschool is scheduled for January 10, 2024 from 9-10am. To register call or email ikozlowski@rsd17.org or 860-663-1121.

Developmental Screening
RSD17 Preschool
Available to all 3 and 4 year olds residing in
Haddam or Killingworth

If you have a question or concern about your child's development or simply want more information about your child, please join us!

Assessment includes:

- ✓ Cognitive and Readiness skills
- ✓ Speech and Language Skills
- ✓ Fine & Gross Motor Skills
- ✓ Adaptive Skills
- ✓ Social Skills

January 10, 2024
9-10 a.m.

To Register Please Call or Email:
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