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

January 2025

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

Department Updates

Finance

- At the Finance and Facilities Subcommittee meeting held on January 14, 2025, the FY24 audit findings were presented. The audit highlighted significant improvements implemented by the finance department, particularly in the areas of internal controls. These advancements underscore the department's commitment to enhancing financial accountability and operational efficiency. The audit findings reflect a proactive approach to addressing previous challenges and ensuring compliance with best practices in financial management. Continued focus on these areas will further strengthen the organization's financial stewardship and align with long-term strategic goals.

Operations

- The Indoor Air Quality (IAQ) reports for all school facilities have been successfully completed and submitted to the State for review. The comprehensive assessment aligns with state requirements and reflects the district's proactive approach to ensuring air quality standards are met across all facilities. These reports will serve as a foundation for ongoing monitoring and any necessary improvements to indoor air quality systems.

- In alignment with OSHA Safety Standards, the Facilities Department has developed a comprehensive compliance procedural book for all head custodians. This resource is designed to standardize operations and enhance safety practices across the district's facilities. The procedural book includes detailed cleaning schedules—daily, weekly, monthly, and annual—along with protocols for critical safety and maintenance tasks, such as fire extinguisher reviews, electrical and safety audits, maintenance of eye wash stations, and generator log sheet documentation. This initiative represents a significant step toward ensuring consistent facility upkeep, compliance with safety standards, and the well-being of all building occupants.

- Dual communication systems for fire alarm monitoring were installed at all schools for enhanced safety and reliability. This upgrade enhances the reliability and redundancy of the fire alarm systems, ensuring continuous communication in the event of an emergency. The implementation of dual communication reflects the district's commitment to prioritizing the safety and security of its students, staff, and facilities. This measure aligns with best practices for emergency preparedness and reinforces compliance with safety standards. The district remains focused on maintaining robust safety infrastructure to

safeguard its school community.

Student Services

- Student Services has worked on informing the department about new legal cases that have occurred in Connecticut. This will allow us to learn from new case law and inform our current practices.
- Student Services is partnering with CSDE on staff professional development for the SPDG math grant to provide additional insight on strategies to incorporate within the classroom.

Food Services

- The National School Lunch Program (NSLP) grant-funded equipment has been successfully delivered and installed at KES, BES, and HKHS. This equipment aims to enhance the efficiency and quality of food service operations at these schools, supporting the program's objectives to provide nutritious meals to students. Following the completion of the installation, funding requests have been submitted to the State for reimbursement.

Talent, Accountability, & Human Resources

- CT State Department of Education notified RSD 17 that our Increasing Educator Diversity Plan had been approved.
- The January Central Office newsletter was sent to all district employees.
- An all-employee notice regarding the CT Paid Sick Leave law was distributed, as required by the CT DOL.

Curriculum Office

- A Beginning Teacher support session was held to help beginning teachers craft and refine their TEAM reflection papers.
- The District Technology Committee completed a software use survey. The information will be used to streamline software use across the district.

Schools

HKHS

- Haddam Killingworth High School will be hosting Abby Brinkmann, an exchange student from Germany, in the spring semester. Facilitated by International Student Exchange (ISE), Abby will be staying with the Robinson family. Abby's father, Knute, was an exchange student with Lisa Robinson's family when Knute and Lisa were teenagers. Knute formed a strong bond with Lisa's family and returned to the US to visit every summer for eight years. Lisa describes Knute as "like a brother to her." When the opportunity

arose to host Abby, Knute's youngest daughter, as an exchange student, Lisa eagerly accepted. She learned through her own family's experience with Knute that "there's always room for one more."

- HK Engineering received a $750 grant from the NASA CONNECTICUT SPACE GRANT CONSORTIUM to help fund one of our Engineering Design and Development course projects (Team America Rocketry Contest), in which students must design and test a 3ft model rocket for national competition.
- The annual Perkins Grant funding was approved by CSDE and has supported several pieces of new equipment for the TV Studio, Wood Shop, Food Service, and Auto. Teachers also received some training during our last PD using grant funds.
- Jessica Duffield, HKHS Class of 2021, visited the HKHS Math Honor Society to share her journey toward a career as an actuary. A senior at Illinois State University, she has already secured a position with The Hartford in Hartford, CT. Jessica explained the role of an actuary and highlighted various career paths, including insurance, finance, and consulting.

HKMS

- HKMS is excited to share that Haddam-Killingworth Middle School will host the CMEA Southern Regional Music Festival on March 7th and 8th! This event will bring together talented young musicians from across the Southern Region of CT for two days of rehearsals and performances.

  This year, 21 HKMS students successfully auditioned and will proudly represent the school in all five performing ensembles: Band, Mixed Choir, Orchestra, Jazz Band, and Treble Choir. We are thrilled to showcase their hard work and dedication and they are excited to host this event for the Southern CT music community!

HKIS

- At HKIS, December was a festive and engaging month filled with activities that boosted morale and school spirit. Staff kicked off the month with an underground spirit week, which was met with enthusiasm and creativity. Staff members displayed their school spirit, and students enjoyed guessing the themes.
- The Student Council sponsored a school-wide spirit week. One of the week's highlights was the color wars between grades 4 and 5 (showing school spirit by sporting either red or green). Students showcased their school pride and teamwork. Our fifth-grade chorus sang carols at the Commonwealth Senior Living Center. The chorus also supported the HK Telethon by singing at the high school. The month concluded with our much-anticipated yearly sing-along. The entire school gathered to celebrate the season with festive songs.

- The Student Council also led a HK Youth and Family Services fundraiser. Penny Wars, a yearly tradition, inspired fun competitions while helping community members. Our Student Council is looking forward to a Leadership Conference put on by CAS in January.

BES

- Burr students are working on academic risk-taking as their character trait focus this month. Students are challenging themselves to take academic risks and persevere through challenging tasks.

- Kindergarten registration for the 2025-2026 school year began on January 8th. Families are encouraged to stop by the Burr office to pick up a registration packet if they have a child turning five by September 1st that they intend to enroll in kindergarten for next year.

KES

- The KES theme of the month is Perseverance. This is the time of year when students start to show a lot of progress with their learning, and we want to teach them how to work hard and persevere through challenging tasks. Students paired up with their buddy classes and learned strategies to employ when things get difficult.

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Social Media Posts:

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