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

March 2025

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

Department Updates

Finance

- The finance department has successfully completed its team with the addition of our new Comptroller, Ms. Attallah Roundtree, as well as a new Accounts Payable Accountant, Mr. Noah Budzik, and a new Payroll Specialist, Ms. Suzanne Michaud, both joining us from LEARN. We are excited to have our entire team in place and look forward to the contributions they will bring.

Operations

- RFP #25-1116 for Copier Equipment Services was released and published on 2/14/25, with a public reading of the respondents on March 7, 2025, at noon. All information is posted on the RSD17 website.
- Facilities Manager, John Converse, met with the Killingworth First Selectman and engineers to review the PFA project in collaboration with the town. The first selectman is reaching out to the state and approved contractors regarding the next steps.

Student Services

- The SPDG grant provided the special education and general education participants opportunities for collaborative professional development to support the program's implementation.

Food Services

- March is "Local Farmers, Local Food" month. Food Services Director Shettleworth has partnered with local farmers to provide lettuce, carrots, honey, and sweet potatoes, which are featured on school menus for March.

Talent, Accountability, & Human Resources

- RSD17 is participating in the UCONN NEAG School of Education Career Fair on March 25.
- The March Central Office Newsletter was emailed to all staff.

Curriculum Office

- Winter assessments for reading and math have been completed across K-8 and analyzed by the District Wide Data Team.

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Schools

HKHS

- **M3 Math Challenge**

  On Sunday, March 2, ten HKHS students (2 teams of juniors and seniors) participated in the MathWorks Math Modeling Challenge. This is an Award-winning international high school math competition that provides an opportunity for students working in small teams to use math and data to represent, analyze, make predictions about, and provide insight into a current world issue. This year's challenge, titled "Hot Button Issue: Staying Cool as the World Heats Up", focused on global warming. Past Challenges have had students address issues such as the transition of trucking from diesel to electric, the affordable housing crisis, availability of internet access, and viability of recycling programs.

  At the end of the 14-hr day, and after developing a well-designed mathematical model, the students submitted their proposal (A 20-page paper!).
  After a rigorous judging process by an international panel of 100+ mostly Ph.D.-level mathematicians, six top teams and three technical computing awardees will advance to present their solutions at the competition's final presentation and awards ceremony event – an all-expense paid experience for the finalist teams—held in New York City in late April.

  Math Honor Society Events

- **MoMath Museum-**
  On Thursday, March 6, the Math Honor Society will be traveling to NYC to visit the MoMath National Math Museum. Students will be riding the train from Clinton to Grand Central Station (the most exciting part for some students!).

- **Counted Out-**
  On Wednesday, March 12, the Math Honor Society is sponsoring a screening of the 2024 documentary, "Counted Out", during Advisory for interested students. This documentary highlights the importance of mathematics by examining its connection to our world outside of the classroom. Mathematics is more than numbers – it is the foundation of opportunity, democracy, and social equity. The film is an eye-opening documentary shining a light on the imminent need to understand mathematics to tackle the significant challenges we face – racial and income inequality, climate change, and political polarization.

- **Pi-Day Pi-K**
  On Thursday, March 13, the Math Honor Society is hosting the second annual Pi-Day Pi-K walk around the track during lunch. Once students complete the Pi-K (3.14 km) walk, they will receive a small pie.

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- **The HKHS Robotics team** competed in the second annual CT State Robotics Championships at the Bridgeport "Total Mortgage Arena" on February 24th and 25th. Students compete in head-to-head competitions, Programming Skills, Engineering Notebooks and Professional Interviews. Over 80 High School teams competed for 10 slots to attend the World competition in Dallas, Texas.
  HK Students placed 10th in Head to Head competition (our best finish ever) and had strong showings in all other competitive categories. Please congratulate Chloe Abarientos, Dylan Brown, Mathias Carroll, and Wyatt Voegtli on an exceptional performance.

  Click here to see them compete:
  https://youtu.be/bXXHu1YOD7g?t=3318

HKMS

- **ELA Achievement**: Our mid-year benchmarks in ELA reached the highest scores in five years, with several classes showing zero students in the red.
- **Accelerated Math Success**: In our 7th-grade Accelerated Math class, 56 out of 60 students have achieved mastery or above.
- **Equitable Access**: We saw a 39% increase in 7th-grade Accelerated Math enrollment this year. We are now reaching out to current 6th-grade families to begin the process and hope to increase participation even further.
- The **HKMS Music Department** is thrilled to host the Southern Region Festival for the Connecticut Music Educators Association on Friday, March 7, and Saturday, March 8!
- The **HKMS Drama Department** is eagerly preparing for its upcoming production of SpongeBob Musical Jr. on March 28 and 29.

HKIS

- HKIS students Reid Bobbie and Scarlett Lamb were honored this month at the Connecticut Association of Schools' Elementary Arts Banquet. Mrs. Scoppa, Mr. Tedeschi, and Mrs. Kelsey joined Mr. Larson and Reid's and Scarlett's family members to celebrate how these two have enriched the school with their visual and performing talents.
- Students had an amazing time at the Backtrack Vocals assembly, which was lively and upbeat. Students learned about acapella groups and how you can use sounds with just your mouth to create incredible music. Thanks to the generous sponsorship of the PTO, this event brought energy and enthusiasm to our school community.
- In the spirit of Valentine's Day, students celebrated friendship by spreading kindness throughout the school. Classrooms facilitated activities focused on appreciation and positivity. Students created

compliment cards, wrote special notes for secret buddies, and shared what makes each person special. The Kindness Club played a big role in spreading joy by hosting compliment tables, where school members could receive "free compliments" to brighten their day.

- Our math teachers have been actively engaged in professional learning, focusing on the math instructional platform, from the work of Sarah R. Powell from the University of Texas at Austin, which is designed to enhance student learning. Teachers explored word problem schemas to help students approach challenging questions with confidence. Additionally, math teachers participated in vertical team discussions to ensure consistent mathematics instruction across grade levels.

BES

- Burr was excited to launch Learning is a Treasure-March Learning Madness! We will be celebrating Read Across America, Women's History Month, and Music in our Schools Month throughout March with a variety of activities including an author visit, estimation jar challenges, a reading genre treasure map, dress up days and more!

KES

- KES has big plans to celebrate Read Across America. This month-long celebration of literacy is designed to encourage students to explore new books, discover different genres, and to help develop a lifelong love of reading. The month is filled with a variety of engagement activities including guest readers, Book-or-Treat events, bookworm contests, and many more special activities.

Social Media Posts:

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