

Comments regarding the implementation of Personalized learning across the Windsor Locks Public School district.

We are fortunate in Connecticut to have such a progressive group of leaders at the helm to develop and strengthen the vision of the college, career, and life ready high school graduate. Thank you to the entire CORE Team, but especially Joe, Janet, and Larry for their hard work and determination to make this work a reality. It's not easy leading a work group full of leaders! But they listened, they questioned, and they ultimately published a document that captures the vision, goals, and recommendations that will drive the transformation of public education – as it already has.

In Windsor Locks, we started on the journey to create a student-centered, mastery-based educational system at least four years ago. As we continuously sought to improve educational outcomes for our students, by improving instruction in the classroom, we came to the conclusion naturally that a student-centered learning environment where students are challenged yet supported to meet rigorous, meaningful standards was the direction in which we needed to steer our ship.

As we have raised expectations for our students, we have seen a transformation in the level of engagement our students now take in the classrooms. Students can demonstrate where they were, where they are, and where they are going in their learning because their voice is a valued part of the teaching and learning process. Students set goals related to the standards they must meet, and they develop plans to achieve those goals. Teachers know students well and can incorporate student interests and other student strengths into classroom instruction. In Windsor Locks, students are beginning to conduct their learning conferences with parents – reporting out on where they are in the learning process, the areas in which they are growing, and the areas where they need additional support. And this is happening, with students in kindergarten, in 3rd grade, 5th grade, 9th, 10th, 11th and 12th...which just proves to us that all students are capable of leading their own learning. We are building confident self-advocates who have realized that learning for the sake of learning – not just for a grade on an assessment or to jump through an arbitrary hoop that will pad their resume – is a powerful and fulfilling human endeavor.

These engaged students will become the leaders of tomorrow. They will have mastered standards which will serve as the bedrock of their future achievement whether through college, in the workplace, or in everyday life. They will be competent and confident young entrepreneurs, philanthropists, physicians, innovators, and game-changers. They will have the ability to solve problems that we ourselves still cannot solve. And they will be able to do that because they have been given the opportunity to learn and grow in a way that matters most to them, where the term “not yet” does not morph into a lifetime sentence on a transcript or report card but provides the student meaningful feedback and a roadmap to learn from mistakes and improve. They will be these promising young citizens because they were given a chance to learn in a system that believes that learning actually happens anytime, anywhere. We will have the opportunity, at our Board of Education meeting tonight, to hear one of our

seniors perform an original song he recently recorded – an experiential learning opportunity made possible with the State Department of Education’s Pilot Program for Unpaid High School Internships – which he created with the help of a community-based partner whose hobby is sound engineering. That student will be recording an EP before the school year ends. This opportunity would not be available to this student in an educational system that values tradition over innovation. Another senior served as the Assistant Director of our High School’s Spring Musical. His love of theater brought him to ask for this opportunity and he was able to be involved at the highest level with the day to day production of this work of art. These are opportunities these students will never forget, and serve as the springboard to the rest of their lives. Relevant and meaningful instruction is the cornerstone of personalized learning – and we are so grateful to the work of CAPSS and all leaders around the state for helping us to make this work a reality in Windsor Locks.