



SOUTHINGTON
Public Schools

Superintendent's Annual Report 2023-2024



Superintendent's Annual Report

2023-2024

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2023-2024

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Southington Public Schools
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SUPERINTENDENT'S EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Steven G. Madancy, Superintendent of Schools

This Annual Report highlights the collective dedication and impressive accomplishments of the Southington Public Schools' staff in their mission to provide exceptional learning opportunities for all students.

Our district remains firmly committed to two foundational priorities: ensuring safety and fostering learning.

Student success is consistently reflected in high graduation rates, strong college acceptance rates, and significant participation and achievement in AP and ECE courses. Our students' academic, athletics, arts, and STEM accolades further underscore their accomplishments. State-level assessments reveal continued growth and success across grade levels, with Southington students performing well compared to peers in similar districts and statewide.

To prepare students for the demands of the modern world, we remain focused on revising curriculum and assessments to align with the district's Vision of a Graduate, emphasizing critical 21st-century skills. Professional development for teachers has been integral to equipping students with consistent opportunities to engage with these essential skills, ensuring progress from kindergarten through high school. The high school spent considerable time and effort furthering their development of career pathways to help students explore career opportunities and pursue further if there was a specific area of interest. The focus at the elementary level was building district leadership capacity with the knowledge needed to implement a new reading curriculum for the 24-25 academic year with an explicit focus on the elements associated with the science of reading.

The Board of Education and district administration have maintained close partnerships with emergency management and town officials to enhance and sustain a secure learning environment. The Interagency Safety Committee remains a standout model across the state, fostering collaboration among local agencies. Priorities for the year included staff training, refining emergency response protocols, and facilities improvements to protect our students and staff.

The accomplishments and progress outlined in this report reflect all district staff's exceptional talent, dedication, and professionalism during the 2023-2024 academic year. Together, we continue to provide a strong foundation for the success and well-being of every student in Southington Public Schools.

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CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

Amy Zappone, Director of Teaching and Learning

Stephanie Lawlor, K-8 English Language Arts & K-5 Social Studies Coordinator

Alicia Naleway, K-8 Mathematics & K-5 Science Coordinator

K-8 English Language Arts

Southington Public Schools is committed to ensuring all students read successfully. During the 2023-2024 school year, the ELA coordinator and literacy coaches continued to study best practices aligned with the research behind the Science of Reading. This included engaging in professional learning opportunities offered by the Connecticut State Department of Education. The *Masterclass* is a statewide professional learning opportunity, co-created with the Connecticut Association of School Superintendents to build capacity around the Science of Reading (SOR). This year's professional learning series focused on the components of comprehensive K-3 literacy instruction. These components include phonics, phonemic awareness, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. Southington had a team of administrators and literacy coaches attend this year-long Masterclass including the Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent, ELA Curriculum Coordinator, four elementary principals, and four literacy coaches. The learning gleaned from these sessions, in addition to other learning experiences, was shared with K-2 teachers and the entire elementary administrative team through monthly professional development.

The ELA Curriculum Coordinator and literacy coaches reviewed all programs on the Connecticut State Department of Education's Approved K-3 Reading Program list. The team narrowed down the selection to two programs and then engaged in another opportunity offered by the CSDE to help with the selection process. The HILL for Literacy provided guidance and a comprehensive review tool to aid in the selection process. The ELA Coordinator assembled a District Literacy Leadership Team, composed of twenty teachers and administrators to work with The HILL for Literacy. In the spring of 2024, the District Literacy Leadership Team brought Benchmark Advance to the Assistant Superintendent and Board of Education as the program of choice. Materials were purchased for grades K-2 using funds from a grant from the CSDE. All K-2 teachers received professional development on Benchmark Advance at the end of the 2023-2024 school year for an implementation start in the 2024-2025 school year.

Science of Reading professional learning began during the 2023-2024 school year for teachers in grades three through five. Shifts in practice continued in the areas of vocabulary and word study. A team of literacy specialists created word study lessons to support teachers in teaching morphology in the upper grades. Professional development in the Science of Reading will continue during the 2024-2025 school year to help teachers understand the pedagogical shifts needed for implementing a new ELA program.

Assessment measures were revised to reflect changes in practice that align with the Science of Reading. During the 2023-2024 school year, DIBELS (Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills) 8th Edition was administered in grades K-5. DIBELS evaluates the five literacy skills necessary to become a successful reader. These skills are:

- **Phonemic Awareness:** Hearing and using sounds in spoken words
- **Alphabetic Principle:** Knowing the sounds of the letters and sounding out written words
- **Accurate and Fluent Reading:** Reading stories easily and quickly with few mistakes
- **Vocabulary:** Understanding and using a variety of words
- **Comprehension:** Understanding what is spoken or read

Professional development in the administration of DIBELS was provided throughout the year. The DIBELS assessment provides teachers with a good indication of how easy or difficult grade-level reading is for students. It provides teachers with specific skills that are areas of strength for students, as well as areas for growth. This information in conjunction with other data points will help teachers to make informed instructional decisions to keep students on track to become accurate and fluent readers.

The partnership with UCONN continued during the 2023-2024 school year and included work with the remaining six elementary schools. The ELA curriculum coordinator collaborated with the special education coordinators to partner with UCONN to support students in reading using the Data-Based Individualization (DBI) process. This partnership with UCONN engaged the administrators, special education teachers, and literacy specialists in using data to make decisions about intervention. A District DBI Team, which included a special education coordinator, two elementary principals, and two literacy specialists was formed. This team worked on a sustainability plan to continue the DBI process without intensive support from UCONN in the following years.

The middle school language arts department focused on using data to differentiate lessons and provide small-group instruction. Teachers were introduced to CommonLit, which is a comprehensive literacy program that provides benchmark assessments and standards-based data for teachers. CommonLit benchmark assessments were administered to students three times and gave teachers helpful information about how students were performing on key skills at their grade level. The assessments also provided teachers with skills students might need additional support with. CommonLit also provided teachers with tailored lessons to address skill deficits.

K-8 Mathematics

Over the 2023-2024 school year, teachers in grades K-5 implemented an updated version of Ready Classroom mathematics. These updates included adjusted learning sequences, incorporation of more math performance tasks (*Math in Action*), more integrated number sense daily, and the inclusion of language routines to help make sense of problems. In addition, grades 2-5 implemented *Fluency Flight*, a new mathematics fluency program by the makers of iReady. Fluency Flight helps to build fact fluency with games and activities that are personalized to the facts they are learning. Teachers continued to utilize iReady diagnostic data to track student achievement and growth. The elementary math team supported teachers in K-5 with professional development on the updates in Ready Classroom, analysis of Smarter Balanced math target data, as well as high-yield instructional

strategies such as problem-solving structures. The elementary math specialists in Grades K-5 engaged in coaching cycles, facilitated professional learning, and provided interventions to students in need of math support. The Bridges Intervention Program was formally implemented in the 2023-2024 school year to help support targeted intervention assessment and instruction.

The middle school mathematics department continued the implementation of the district's Illustrative Mathematics curriculum with a focus on incorporating high-yield instructional strategies from the book, *Building Thinking Classrooms*. Middle school math teachers tried vertical whiteboards and visibly random groups to help increase student autonomy, engagement, and discourse in math. Middle school math teachers utilized formative assessment to drive tier 1 differentiation in the classroom and small group work. The middle school math department continued to utilize iReady to track student data and growth. The department analyzed Smarter Balanced data and made instructional adjustments to the scope and sequence to address areas of focus. The two middle school math specialists continued to support teachers with instructional strategies, helped to facilitate the SRBI process, and provided interventions to students in need of math support.

K-8 Science

In elementary science, grades K-5 continued their implementation of the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) units of study that focus on scientific inquiry through phenomena-based instruction. The kindergarten NGSS units were formally implemented this school year and kindergarten teachers participated in professional development throughout the year to support their implementation of the new units. Grade 5 students participated in the Connecticut Invention Convention which develops creative problem-solving and critical thinking skills through invention and entrepreneurship. Southington had 22 fifth-grade students who were state finalists at the Connecticut Invention Convention.

The district continued its strong partnership with Lewis Educational Agricultural Farm (LEAF) this year. Mark Ramsay worked collaboratively with the science department, students, and teachers at all elementary schools in grade 2 to plant school gardens. In addition, the district continued planning with YMCA Camp Sloper staff to support a fourth-grade field trip to the facility. All fourth-grade students engaged in a field trip at YMCA Camp Sloper that connected to their science curriculum unit, "Land and Water." In addition, grade 2 attended Sloper to explore the environment as it related to animal habitats.

The middle school science department continued implementing *Open Sci Ed* units across all three grades, with a goal of full *Open Sci Ed* implementation in the school year 2024-2025. Teachers in the department engaged in professional learning based on the book, "Building Thinking Classrooms," where they experimented using vertical whiteboards as a classroom strategy to promote student thinking. The department plans to implement vertical whiteboards as a tool to support inquiry-based teaching and learning in science.

K-8 Social Studies

The social studies curriculum coordinator reviewed the newly released Connecticut Social Studies Standards as new ELA programs were being reviewed. It was important to align topics in the social studies curriculum with the topics being taught in the knowledge-building portion of any ELA program being considered. *Benchmark Advance* was selected and has three units per grade level, aligned with the social studies topics in the areas of government and citizenship; history, culture and geography; and economics.

Fifth-grade classes continued to participate in *Connecticut's Kid Governor* program. A student from Oshana Elementary School was elected Kid Governor for the state of Connecticut on November 21, 2023. The student's platform is, "Getting Fit 4 Fun," which addresses physical activity for students.

The middle school social studies department focused its efforts on exploring and unpacking the newly released K-12 Connecticut Social Studies Standards. Teachers examined the new standards and began exploring curriculum and resources to support their instruction. In addition, the department engaged in professional learning based on the book, "Building Thinking Classrooms," where they experimented using vertical whiteboards as a classroom strategy to promote student thinking. The department is excited to continue learning about instructional strategies that support inquiry and deep thinking in the social studies classroom.

9-12 Academic Departments

Southington High School's academic departments implemented high-quality instructional strategies in their first year of teaching in a block schedule. Teachers embraced innovative lesson design techniques to engage learners in longer instructional blocks. Each department utilized collaborative planning and professional learning time to pace and chunk lessons within the new schedule.

Department leaders and teachers across various departments, such as physical education, music, science, and mathematics brought forward multiple new or revised curriculum units to the Curriculum and Instruction Committee. Updating all curriculum at SHS continues to be a goal for all academic departments. Department leaders and their staff continued to work diligently over the school year on curriculum projects outlined in the district's curriculum renewal cycle.

Departments did exceptional work with prioritizing curriculum needs and identifying courses and experiences that align with the career pathways at SHS. Over the course of the year, several dual enrollment courses were added to the program of studies, along with various internal and external internships and work-based learning experiences for students. For the coming year, the goal is to continue expanding work-based learning offerings to students across all career pathways.

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BUSINESS DEPARTMENT

Jennifer S. Mellitt, Director of Business & Finance

The Business Department accomplished the following during the 2023-2024 school year.

Financial Summary of FY 2023-2024

The 2023-24 approved operating budget was \$110,460,653. The approved budget included an employer municipal retirement contribution rate of 19.57% for our non-certified staff. After approval of the FY 2023-24 budget, the state reduced the required employer contribution rate to 15.85% resulting in availability in the municipal retirement budgeted amounts of approximately \$570,000. During October 2023, some funds were transferred to provide matching funds for the STEAP grant received from the state, the staff restructuring of the Technology Department, staffing for the Special Education TLC expansion, and cash funding for a new vehicle for the maintenance department among other uses.

The district closed the 2023-24 year with unexpended funds of \$251,097; however, some of the unexpended funds had been allocated to projects during the May budget reallocation process. Those projects included technology lab replacements, school furniture and equipment, contracted painting, and sidewalk and catch basin repairs. The remaining unexpended balance was \$142,847 or 0.13% of our operating budget.

Budget Development FY 2024-2025

During the 2023-2024 school year, the Board of Education's 2024-2025 operating budget was developed and initially presented to the Town of Southington's Board of Finance (BOF) at \$117,354,089 an increase of \$6,893,436 or 6.24%. The Board of Education's (BOE) budget included 19.16 FTEs in new personnel with a cost of \$1,561,790 and major projects and equipment of \$594,266. Health insurance continued to be a large driver of the requested increase at \$1,421,476.

The BOF approved a budget of \$116,815,689 which included a reduction to the required insurance contribution and a budget reduction of \$420,000. The final operating budget approved by the Town Council was \$115,960,489 representing a 4.98% increase. Although the approved budget was a 4.98% increase, the Town Council's approval included a budget reduction of \$500,000 along with additional reductions to the self-insurance fund contributions.

The total budget reductions of \$920,000 were mainly achieved by funding \$175,358 in projects and equipment with FY 2023-24 funds, removing medical benefits for the new personnel, magnet school reductions based on the state legislative actions, reduction of one bus route, along with other reductions. Although reductions were made by the various boards during the budget process, the approved budget included 18.86 FTEs in new personnel.

The budget process also included a request for funding of one-time projects and equipment for HVAC inspections, repairs to the high school gym flooring, and various other projects. The Town Council approved funds of \$241,334 to allow the Board of Education to accomplish these projects.

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Unexpended Funds Account

A legislative change to the CT General Statute 10-248a allows the Board of Education to approve the deposit of unexpended operating budget funds, up to the statutory limit, into a non-lapsing account rather than the Town's Board of Finance. The June 24th Town Council meeting approved a new process for the Board of Education to work directly with the Town's Finance Director to establish the non-lapsing account. The funds can be used for educational purposes only and the expenditures shall be authorized by the local Board of Education.

The FY 24 non-lapsing account was approved in the amount of \$251,097 with approved projects totaling \$108,250. During September 2024, two additional projects were allocated to allow funds to be used for the upcoming districtwide transportation RFP and continued work on the elementary projects.

Office of the Director of Business and Finance

The Business Office was busy with the staff transition of the Food Service Director, the Accounting Manager and the Administrative Assistant who all started at the beginning of the 2023-2024 school year.

The volume of grants increased with ARPA Summer Mental Health, ARPA Right to Read, ARPA Dual Credit Expansion, IDEA Transition Support Activities, IDEA Paraeducator Training, PEGPETIA, and the Title III Immigrant grant.

The district continued using the ARP ESSER, ARP Homeless HCY, and ARP IDEA grants to address learning loss and to address the mental health needs of the students. The district has continued to maximize resources to meet the needs of students and staff while being mindful of the fiscal cliff these temporary funds created.

Purchasing Office

A new Accounting Manager was hired in September 2023. Under his leadership, the Purchasing Department worked diligently on bids and RFPs for the redesign of entryways at two schools, improvements to the back parking lot at the Karen Smith Academy, roofing at the high school, and the high school track renovation. The high school track was mainly funded by a Small Town Economic Assistance Program ("STEAP") grant of \$500,000.

Payroll Office:

The Payroll Office continued their implementation of the new Time and Attendance System which is fully integrated with our Absence Management system and our payroll processing system.

The staff are being cross-trained to expand the knowledge base of the payroll and benefits staff. The Payroll Supervisor continues to work in conjunction with the Human Resources Manager and the Information Systems Manager to integrate the new Frontline Central system with our existing systems.

The state of CT established a program to assist paraeducators with their high deductible health plan deductible in the Fall of 2023. Southington received over \$196,000 to deposit into paraeducator health savings accounts.

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Food Services

The 2023-2024 school year brought another new program to help provide free meals to students in school. The program established by the State of Connecticut was funded through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). The program (State Transition Assistance for Breakfast and Lunch Expenses “STABLE”) provided free breakfast for all students and free lunches for students eligible for reduced-priced meals. Students not eligible for free or reduced meals began paying for lunches all year for the first time since the pandemic. Like many districts across the state, this funding structure led to students accruing a negative meal balance. Despite collection efforts, the district ended the year with over \$10,000 in negative student meal debt. The state of CT allowed Food Service operations to use the excess operating funds to write off the negative debt at the conclusion of the 2023-24 school year.

A new Food Service Director was hired in August 2023 after the retirement of our long-time director. Staffing continues to be difficult for kitchen personnel. The kitchen personnel hours returned to a more normal operation due to the lower lunch meal counts.

In March 2024, the state of CT conducted an Administrative Review of our Food Service department with minimal corrective actions noted. The state review staff were impressed with the quality of the documentation packet provided for review and with the rapport the kitchen staff has with our students at the three locations reviewed.

Southington Food Service received a National School Lunch Program Equipment Assistant grant from the Connecticut State Department of Education to purchase a double convection oven for the high school kitchen for \$38,143.

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OPERATIONS

Peter Romano, Director of Operations

The Operations Office has accomplished the following items during the 2023-2024 school year:

Construction and Building System Improvements

- The Southington High School partial roof replacement project architectural plans and specifications were approved by the state. The roofing portion of the project was awarded to Silktown Roofing. At the close of the school year, they began the removal of the existing roof and replacement with a 30-year warranted roof system on the main building. The roofing portion of the project is anticipated to be completed before the start of the school year. The designer for the photovoltaic system portion of the work was awarded. The photovoltaic system will be bid and installed during the 2024-2025 fiscal year.
- The elementary school's main entrances received security improvements. The interior vestibule doors now remain electronically locked. Visitors may communicate with the office via video system and a secured pass-through window.
- Construction began on a new vestibule entry addition at the main entrance for SHS. The new entrance will create a secured vestibule and a separate room for the security staff to communicate with visitors.
- LED field lights were installed on the SHS Girls Varsity Softball field.
- Security cameras, switches, and network infrastructure were upgraded, and devices were added at SHS with grant funding from the State of CT.
- A new LED field light system was installed at the all-purpose turf field at SHS. The LED lights with the "ball tracker system" were retrofitted on the existing poles. The pole that was located in front of the bleachers on the home side was relocated and replaced with a new pole behind the bleachers.
- Roof observations were performed at all schools on a bi-monthly basis. This provides data for improvement on strategies to ensure the reliable, long-term performance and extension of the life cycle of roofs district-wide.
- Replacement of the 6-lane running track around the all-purpose field at SHS began at the close of the school year. Work will continue through the summer and is anticipated to be completed in mid-September. Funding for the project was primarily through a state grant.
- The phone systems at Hatton, Strong, and Thalberg Elementary Schools were replaced with the Mitel phone systems that are currently used at the majority of schools and at the Central Office.

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Transportation

- Similar to the previous year, our contract vendor, NBT, had difficulties with maintaining adequate staffing to support the needs of the district. This was typical of transportation vendors in CT school districts. We worked closely with NBT and our other vendors to maintain adequate transportation services for the regular and special education programs. Transportation was provided again this summer for the enrichment and the extended school year programs.

Energy Conservation

- Energy Management System (EMS): With ten of the district's schools on the web-based dashboard, we continued to monitor systems and programmed them for optimum efficiency and health of the buildings.

Reporting

- Radon Testing Programs – Air quality testing for Radon was performed as per EPA and state guidelines for ongoing testing in the schools. Radon testing is required at all schools on a three-year cycle.
- During the summer break, we worked with vendors to test fire sprinklers, fire alarms, generators, fire extinguishers, smoke detectors, and kitchen hoods at all schools. All systems passed, and the results have been shared with the SFD.

Health and Safety

- Operations, in conjunction with the Southington Police and Fire Departments, coordinated and participated in monthly emergency drills and fire drills at all schools, districtwide.
- Operations was the chairperson for the Districtwide Safety Committee which met quarterly. Representation from all unions meet to discuss safety concerns that staff may have as they relate to the district as a whole.
- Additional 2-way radios were received, programmed, and deployed to schools.
- Polychlorinated biphenyl (PCB) testing was conducted at J.A. DePaolo Middle School, J. F. Kennedy Middle School, and the John Weichsel Municipal Center. The test results have been substantially lower than EPA guidelines for action, with many areas registering a non-detected result. We continue to collaborate with our environmental attorney to seek relief from this testing.

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Administrative Enhancements

- The Operations Department oversaw and maintained the online process created for reporting district-wide fire and safety drills. Drills are reported annually to the CT State Division of Energy Management and Homeland Security.
- The Operations Department continues to build on its electronic infrastructure. Operations work closely with all the schools in the district. The transition to electronic documentation for the department has allowed for greater efficiencies and information sharing throughout the district. A considerable amount of work has been moved to the Google Doc format including sheets and forms for transportation tracking logs, transportation requests and complaints, snow removal vendors and events, lawn maintenance vendors, and custodian scheduling.

District-wide and Town Collaboration

- Shared Resources: The Operations Department continued its' ongoing collaboration with the town to complete repairs, service calls, and projects at town buildings, as needed. We performed work at SPD, Animal Control, SFD, Highway Department, and at the Town Hall.

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HUMAN RESOURCE DEPARTMENT

Michelle Passamano, Human Resource Manager

The focus of the Human Resource Department during the 2023-2024 fiscal year was to update essential human resource documents, continue exploring and acting on recruiting and hiring efficiencies, and support all Southington Public Schools employees.

Human Resource Information Systems

Frontline Solution: Central

As a continuation of the 2022-2023 fiscal year, efficiencies remained a priority. Working in conjunction with the technology department, there was collaboration in implementing Frontline Central. This human resource information system solution connects the application system with onboarding for new employees. This program provides a one-stop location for all employees to review personal information, view available sick, personal, and vacation time, and complete forms to update payroll and personal records. Highlights associated with this program include:

- a. All onboarding/offboarding forms are sent to employees through Frontline Central and stored within the system, providing district departments with immediate access to employee information.
- b. New hires receive reminders of items needed for completion of onboarding.
- c. Upon completion of forms, they go through a workflow and are sent to the appropriate department(s) for review and processing.
- d. Existing employees have access to forms to update existing information.
- e. Annual reminders are filtered through Frontline Central including balloon check options, open enrollment, and demographic updates.
- f. Annual mandated trainings were sent to all staff to ensure completion prior to the start of the 2024-2025 school year. Confirmation of completion ensures the district is compliant with State of Connecticut requirements.

Frontline Central will sync with the existing school district employee database that is managed through Alio. The human resource, payroll, and technology departments continued their collaboration and reviewed and updated fields, job codes, classifications, and how information is stored so all systems and terminology are consistent amongst all departments.

The district was asked to host a full-day training session for all Frontline users in Connecticut. This was held on February 7, 2024. There were 8 representatives from Frontline and 51 participants from surrounding towns. This was an incredible opportunity to network and learn more about the benefits and efficiencies that are available through Frontline Solutions.

LiveScan Fingerprinting

A requirement for all new hires is to get fingerprinted for background checks. In the past, new hires were scheduling appointments at the Southington Police Department. Often, there was a delay in completion, as appointment times were limited. This year, the human resource department was trained and certified to offer fingerprinting in the office. Therefore, when new hires arrive for their onboarding appointment, the fingerprinting is done onsite, preventing a delay between scheduling appointments with the police department and new staff starting their positions.

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Job Description Review

In conjunction with the appropriate departments and administrators, the human resource department updated and brought forward multiple job descriptions. This work will continue in the 2024-2025 school year.

Terms of Employment

All non-union employees are provided with terms of employment upon hire. Such documents were updated and include job-specific benefits such as health insurance, retirement, sick/personal/vacation time, and observed holidays.

Bargaining Unit Negotiations

The human resource department participated in the negotiation process for two contracts:

1. NILU Administrative Assistants and Food Service Workers
2. AFSCME Nurses

Southington Public Schools Employee Handbook

Bargaining unit contracts and terms of employment dictate a large portion of procedures for Southington Public Schools employees. What was missing was an employee handbook that provided additional information that was not covered within those documents. The handbook was completed and is being distributed to all staff, through Frontline Central, in October 2024. Some of the areas addressed include *Equal Opportunity and Diversity, Non-Discrimination, Conflict of Interest, Employee Relationships, Workplace Safety, Workplace Guidelines, Time Off/Leaves of Absence, Employee Benefits, FMLA, and an Acknowledgment and Receipt of Handbook.*

Training for HR Department

1. Legal Updates: School Law (August 2023)
2. Connecticut Association of School Personnel Administrators (October 2023, March 2024, May 2024)
3. Legal Update for the Public Sector 2023 (May 2024)
4. Frontline Central: Implementation of New Program Software (ongoing throughout the year)

Southington Public Schools Career Fair

The human resource department coordinated a job fair in January 2024. The fair was held in the public assembly room at the John Weichsel Municipal Center. The event was well-attended with over 90 jobseekers. Administrators attended and were available to provide information about upcoming and current opportunities. On-the-spot interviews were offered for anyone interested in getting a jump start on the process. Available to all attendees was technical assistance and guidance on submitting their online application.

Health & Wellness Program

This year proved to be a huge success for our health and wellness program. The human resource department developed guidelines, procedures, and survey templates that were introduced to the committee. Surveys provided feedback to the committee to help guide the direction of the committee. Some of the offerings included walking challenges, breathwork, stress relief, healthy recipes, yoga, pickleball, kickboxing, and Zumba.

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Increasing Educator Diversity Plan

A legislative mandate was introduced in July 2023 stating that each local and regional board of education shall submit an increasing educator diversity plan. The human resource department led a committee of six to develop this plan and submit it by the deadline date of March 15, 2024.

Ongoing Work

In fiscal year 2023-2024, the department continued its efforts to transform the office and implement new programs and opportunities to provide exceptional services to all employees. Through networking, ongoing training, research, and listening to feedback, the department will continue to seek ways to provide the best resources possible for all employees.

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PUPIL PERSONNEL SERVICES

Rebecca J. Cavallaro, Ed.D., Director of Pupil Personnel Services

The leadership team continues to work collaboratively to ensure staffing and services are meeting the needs of students and their families while looking at all facets of the district to ensure efficiency. Areas of focus for the Special Education Department for the 2023-2024 school year were:

Program Development for Inclusive Settings: The Pupil Personnel Services leadership team continued to focus efforts on providing high-quality in-district programming for students with more intensive educational needs who might otherwise be outplaced. The department continued to work and refine programming needs throughout the year based on the growing and changing populations of students within Southington. Program name changes and expansion of district programs were an ongoing focus and are summarized as follows.

- Specialized Learning Center (SLC) is a self-contained program that is designed to serve students who have been identified as having autism spectrum disorders. This program grew to three classrooms for the 23-24 school year to accommodate the anticipated 22 students for that year. This year the program has continued to grow, with an anticipated 26 students for the 24-25 school year. SLC continues to maintain and enhance its ability to provide a high level of programming for students with autism. Following the consultation with CREC that was utilized during its formative years, the SLC program utilizes the Colorado Department of Education Autism Program Quality Indicators to assess programming and set goals for enhancement.
- Comprehensive Learning Center (CLC), located at JFK, was also identified by the leadership team as needing to expand to create increased services for the growing population of learners that require additional structure and support due to their significant developmental delays and challenges. This program continues to adjust based on student needs and will be receiving the first group of students from the SLC program this fall.
- STELLAR, located in Southington, CT at 51 North Main Street, is the district's community-based transitional program designed for students with various developmental disabilities. We continued to expand our scope of student support as we welcomed a student with significant physical needs last school year. The staff collaborated with state agencies and contracted support to increase the opportunities for students in our program.
- Therapeutic Learning Center (TLC) has undergone revamping in programming and staffing thanks to the efforts of the Pupil Personnel Services leadership team. This program provides school-based clinical intervention services to students at Southington High School at risk of education outplacement. The team has worked to reestablish this program utilizing district clinical staff in favor of a

Superintendent's Annual Report 2023-2024 – Pupil Services Department

consultative model to support this population of students and continue to build capacity within the program.

- Therapeutic Learning Center (TLC) at the elementary level has grown from two classrooms to three classrooms to meet the growing needs of students. Two of the classrooms were consolidated at one school to minimize disruption during transitions from the primary to intermediate grades.

Assistive Technology: The department continued to use an inventory database this school year to track and monitor student devices provided by the district.

State and Federal Compliance: The Pupil Personnel Services (PPS) Department maintained compliance with the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA) and its implementing regulations and the Connecticut State Statutes and Regulations for Special Education. The Connecticut State Department of Education reports annually on state and district progress on 14 performance indicators in special education. Southington's most recent District Annual Performance Report indicated that Southington was a district classified as "Meets Requirements" in all areas except the performance indicator focusing on suspensions and expulsions. As a remedy, the District is required to complete a self-report to regain compliance with this indicator. This rating, based on the indicators, was determined by ongoing data collection, Special Education Data Application Collection (SEDAC) reports, and numerous other state monitoring reports.

Community and Parent Partnerships: Continuing collaboration with parents, community stakeholders, and local/state agencies is essential to ensure that students with disabilities have choices and opportunities in the community and the Southington school district. Those partnerships included the Lewis Educational Agricultural Farm (LEAF), Southington Parks and Recreation programs, Emotional Intelligence (EI) presentations for several groups, Community Mental Health Stakeholders Committee, Student Attendance and Truancy Committee, Southington's Town-wide Effort to Promote Success (STEPS), the Southington YMCA, Southington Early Childhood Collaborative (ECCS), and Southington Youth Services. With the shift to Connecticut's Special Education Data System, CT-SEDS, steps have been put into place to ensure that parents have the information needed to navigate these changes. The Director of Pupil Personnel Services initiated the parent introduction to CT-SEDS with a letter from which future communications will follow.

Special Education Advisory Council: The Director of Pupil Personnel Services engaged in professional development and learning through monthly meetings with the Farmington Valley Directors as well as the Connecticut Council of Administrators of Special Education (ConnCASE). The updates provided to districts from the state were valuable in providing ongoing support and direction to the department and Southington Public Schools in special education.

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School Readiness and Prevention: The Preschool Program continued to be successful in meeting the needs of the district's youngest learners with the added increased level of school psychologist support and on-site preschool facilitator. The Family Resource Center (FRC) and the partnership with Birth-to-Three agencies continued to provide support and resources for the youngest students and their families. The Integrated Preschool Program expanded to include a PK5 classroom to meet the special education needs of children who do not turn 5 by the new age of kindergarten eligibility. The superintendent of schools is utilizing the preschool program as an option for parents whose child is not provided early kindergarten entry, if desired for community peer placement, at no cost.

Elementary School Level: The four in-district classrooms for students with significant emotional/behavioral issues and significant developmental/cognitive concerns continued to be a great asset in providing a continuum of services for elementary students. The K-5 special education teachers received professional development on the use of DIBELS for progress monitoring with plans for future professional development that will focus on mClass in alignment with the district's shift in benchmark and progress monitoring for students. The special education teachers received professional development on making adaptation changes to instruction and programming based on student data. They also received professional development in the Science of Reading. Professional development for the upcoming school year will include learning the district's new reading curriculum, Benchmark. The district entered into a partnership with the UCONN Neag School of Education and all eight elementary schools to bring Data-Based Individualization to Southington to increase literacy achievement. The DBI model will be utilized district-wide to inform SRBI practices.

The district has added a full-time Speech/Language Pathologist Assistant to the SLP department to meet the growing needs of students.

Middle School Level: The Reading Academy at J. F. Kennedy Middle School continued to be very successful this year, meeting the needs of middle school students with Dyslexia. This intense literacy program (scientifically research-based) meets the needs of students who have significant reading disabilities including Dyslexia. The CLC program, formerly EASE, at J. F. Kennedy Middle School and the TLC program, formerly TEAM, at J. A. DePaolo Middle School provided structure and resources for students with significant developmental delays and students with significant social/emotional challenges.

The three district programs at the Middle School level - Reading Academy, CLC, and TLC all continue to grow in support of students. Both CLC and TLC have increased in student population and a new school psychologist has joined the TLC team. Both Middle Schools are partnering with the UCONN Department of Psychiatry on the TEAMSS study involving transition supports for incoming grade 6 students to support students as they acclimate to the structure and size of the Middle School.

Superintendent's Annual Report 2023-2024 – Pupil Services Department

High School Level: The PPS Department continued to plan for professional development regarding the PPT (Planning and Placement Team) process, best practices in creating IEPs (Individual Education Plans), and maximizing resources based on student's needs. In addition, the special education teachers alongside their general education counterparts participated in professional development on how to maximize instruction and engagement in the block schedule, including differentiation strategies to help all learners experience success. In collaboration with the team at SHS, the PPS Department has worked to continue to revise programming and services to meet the needs of our students; the Comprehensive Learning Center (CLC) and the Therapeutic Learning Center (TLC) provide structure and resources for students with significant developmental delays and students with significant social/emotional challenges. The "Flash Friends" program for CLC was expanded into a full-year course, CLC Artshop. In addition, the music department created a co-taught class with the special education department, CLC Music, to provide more elective opportunities for our unique learners.

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TECHNOLOGY DEPARTMENT

Jessica Poon, Information Systems Manager

Tyler Savage, Network Manager

Rebecca Savelkoul, Digital Learning Coordinator

Goals

As we continue navigating the post-pandemic public school environment staff and students are still adjusting. An area that continues to be key is the increased opportunities technology can provide staff and students. The following are the goals set by the Technology Department to maximize the investment in Technology and enhance the learning experience:

- Increase the dependability of the network.
- Increase data security for staff and students.
- Improved efficiencies of systems, both within the department and the district as a whole.
- Increase awareness and capacity to utilize current district technology.
- Increase the depth of knowledge for all members of the Technology Department to effectively support the district.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of all technology tools through the following questions:
 - Does this increase the efficiency of our teachers, which frees them to do impactful teaching and learning with students?
 - Does this create deeper learning opportunities for students, opening up access to information and people that would not be possible without the technology?

Operational Enhancements

The 2023-2024 school year was full of district-wide projects, new equipment, and ongoing long-term planning. The following were the major technology initiatives accomplished:

Network Improvements

We know that reliable access to online services is a major concern for teaching and learning. A goal of the department is to work towards 100% uptime. In 2023-2024, we replaced 151 WiFi access points to provide more reliable and faster internet speeds. In addition, 54 network switches were replaced with more robust hardware, allowing us to reduce the overall number from 86. We also removed or upgraded legacy Windows Servers to ensure we are receiving the latest security updates.

Security

To enhance security and compliance with the Cyber Security Insurance requirements, we bolstered our advanced antivirus utilities. This provides real-time updates on potential viruses and proactive blocking of ransomware attacks. The firewall was enhanced to improve network security and close vulnerable gaps. We partnered with a company called KnowBe4 to expand our email filtering to prevent targeted Phishing attacks and provide training to staff on email

Superintendent's Annual Report 2023-2024 – Technology Department

security. Finally, we implemented critical roadblocks to prevent the sharing of critical staff and student data with malicious parties.

Cameras

The security and camera systems were outdated. During 2023-2024, the Technology Department worked with Operations to deploy over 60 new cameras to SHS. Additionally, we replaced the server hardware to allow for higher-quality Video. Finally, we are now collaborating with the Southington Police Department to obtain live video in the event of an incident.

Hardware

The 2023-2024 school year was year three of a five-year replacement plan to allow us to stay current on hardware, software, network, and other vital components of our infrastructure. This included the deployment of over 150 Viewsonics, assuring consistent projection access for the teaching staff. The Technology Department was awarded grant funds that allowed us to catch up in the replacement cycle for staff and devices, which was interrupted by the pandemic. Just over 200 new MacBooks and Windows Laptops were deployed to staff. Just over 1,500 new Chromebooks were deployed to students, and 4,480 repairs were completed on student Chromebooks. We also refreshed three Computer labs (65 Computers) at SHS to provide students with the latest technologies that are industry-specific and cannot be accessed via their student-issued Chromebooks.

Department Efficiencies

We have finalized a restructure of the department to provide more consistent coverage to all buildings. We are committed to department knowledge shares, which increases the capacity of all team members and allows the staff to be able to assist staff immediately.

The department continues to explore more cost-effective vendors, products, and services that still deliver a high-quality experience for staff and students. Examples of this include the migration to self-managed monitoring and upgrades, conversion to Viewsonic interactive displays in classrooms, and the switch to Windows devices.

Student Information Systems

PowerSchool consistently pushes out new updates and features that help teachers and administrative staff stay on top of the day-to-day information to keep students safe and on track. The Technology Department worked to update or generate user guides to provide administrative staff with the information needed regarding their students, staff, and schedules.

With the implementation of block schedules at the high school, many existing reports needed to be adjusted to suit the needs of the administrative staff. New reports and processes were also put

Superintendent's Annual Report 2023-2024 – Technology Department

in place to ensure staff were able to determine staff duties and lunch waves as these are not built as a part of the students' schedules in April.

Adjustments to the middle school schedules required creative thinking and collaboration between the middle school scheduling team, the Technology Department, and the Curriculum and Instruction team. Students went from going to their health class every six days for a whole year, to a structured cohort that provided two trimesters of PE and one trimester of health. These adjustments had to be made within the system so that the scheduler could cohort the health and PE sections. This cohort strategy can now be implemented with other courses as needed.

With potential changes to the middle school master schedules, the Technology Department assisted with generating several schedule samples and loaded students into sections. This provided the administration with information regarding FTE and class size impacts.

Many of our purchased tools and resources use PowerSchool as the initial source of information to generate rosters and accounts. Additional syncs that were added include but are not limited to, bus data and school lunch. With a transition from Naviance to Maia, about 16 years of historical data was exported from Naviance and imported into Maia. To improve Accountability Index Data points for the district, additional data verification steps were added to ensure all data points are reported accurately to the state.

SPS Website

The last website redesign for the district was in 2017. The Technology Department collaborated with Finalsity and evaluated every aspect of the website to ensure a smooth experience for the end user. Ongoing conversations with the Superintendent ensured that the vision for the district was displayed. Once the initial template of the website was determined, additional collaboration with the Library Media Specialists started to customize each of the school's sub-sites. The Technology Department also worked with Image Marketing to develop a district logo and rolled it out in conjunction with the new website design.

Enrollment Express

Our new student registration process transitioned from using Enrollment to Enrollment Express, both of which are partner products of PowerSchool. Transitioning to Enrollment Express as an add-on to PowerSchool brings all forms and information under the PowerSchool umbrella, rather than maintaining an external system. That same account works while they complete their new registration forms and will continue to be utilized through their child's time within the district. The district registrar and the Technology Department worked to ensure a smooth process for the district registrar, office staff, nursing staff, and parents.

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The Technology Department also coordinated the update of current student information through the “Returning Student Registration” forms. This allowed families to update any demographic information on their students, update health information, and sign off on yearly agreements.

CT-SEDS

With the transition away from Frontline’s IEP Direct and 504 Direct, the Technology Department facilitated the export of all historical student documents out of Frontline and uploaded them into CT-SEDS to ensure they were archived into the student’s record. One of the improvements of this system was the ability to set up a parent demographic sync, which sends parent information from PowerSchool to CT-SEDS on a nightly basis. Another improvement was that the Technology Department was able to collaborate with the State Office and the Office of Pupil Personnel Services to provide all administrators and regular education staff a way of viewing student IEPs or 504s online as needed. This is now a direct sync from CT-SEDS to PowerSchool and attaches a copy of a student’s IEP to their record in PowerSchool.

Staff Information Systems

Weidenhammer, the company that owns Alio, our financial software, migrated to a fully web-based platform called LINQ. While many of the screens in LINQ remain the same, a lot of the back-end functionality has changed. The Technology Department collaborated with the Payroll and Purchasing departments, to test LINQ to ensure all major processes worked smoothly before fully migrating to the production side of LINQ. This project has been ongoing through the 2023-2024 school year but will fully live in the fall of 2024. A major advantage of this change is that end users no longer need the Technology Department to physically touch their laptops to allow access to the program.

Another major collaborative effort was between the Technology Department and the Human Resources Department. Regular meetings ensured a smooth implementation of Frontline Central. This conversion required many separate information databases to be cleaned up and imported into Frontline. One of the first improvements is the dissemination and tracking of the Annual Mandated Training for all staff. Another improvement is the delivery of New Hire packets to facilitate the initial onboarding of staff to happen electronically.

Ongoing meetings between the Technology Department and the Payroll Department facilitated enhancements. Absence Management and Time & Attendance were generated as needed.

To streamline department processes, the Technology Department is working with ClassLink to create an automated process for creating staff accounts. The configuration of OneSync (a ClassLink product that is already used for creating student accounts), started in December. Meetings continue with the vendor to establish the configuration needed and implementation is planned for November 2024.

Superintendent's Annual Report 2023-2024 – Technology Department

Professional Development

During the school year, professional development sessions were offered to the Administrative Assistant group. Topics included Frontline Central, ParentSquare, and LINQ. As new administrative assistants were hired, or upon request, individual training sessions were offered to assist staff in learning new or additional skills that would help them to complete any task/job that was asked of them.

Instructional Enhancements

Instruction Management Tools

There were no new software packages added for instruction management. Professional development focused on how our current resources can be used to create more efficiency, deepen learning, and drive personalized instruction. Software packages such as ClassLink, GoGuardian, ParentSquare, and Lyman Data Warehouse are examples of tools that put the technology in the hands of teachers, parents, and students in a more effective way.

Curriculum Tools

ELA added a new software package for benchmark assessments in grades K-5, which provides more accurate data to classroom teachers. The Technology Department worked in collaboration with the Curriculum and Instruction team to set up and implement this software, as well as offering training sessions for the other instructional programs that directly support our adopted curriculum. Examples include iReady, Explore Learning, CommonLit, Newsela, Mystery Science, Adobe, and Make Music.

Instructional Support Tools

Some tools are designed to be content-agnostic, where the purpose is to enhance instruction regardless of the subject being taught. We continue to refine this list based on teacher and student usage, impact on learning, ease of implementation, educational needs of students, and technology developments. This includes collaboration with Teachers and Coordinators in Special Education to support students with assistive technology needs. Examples of the software used in this area include Canvas, Classroom, EdPuzzle, BrainPop, WeVideo, Padlet, ProQuest, and Kami.

Student Help Desk

The Technology Department collaborated with Southington High School to develop a Student Help Desk internship. This internship provides students interested in the Science, Technology Engineering, and Mathematics career cluster an opportunity to engage in relevant field experience. Students work with the Technology Department and the SHS Library to hone their skills and apply them to the technology needs of their peers.

Superintendent's Annual Report 2023-2024 – Technology Department

Technology Celebrations

The collaboration between the Technology Department and other departments, such as Human Resources, Operations, Curriculum and Instruction, Pupil Personnel Services, and Food Service has increased dramatically. This was largely driven by the increased expectations to leverage the technology in ways that made all departments more efficient. Projects such as the new Help Desk System, ClassLink, Absence Management, and Time & Attendance have made internal systems more streamlined.

The department was awarded various grants, including E-Rate, the Emergency Connectivity Fund, and a state Pegpetia grant. These grants enabled us to recover the staff and student device replacement cycle, improve the quality of the audio/visual equipment in the classrooms by installing Viewsonic interactives, and refresh aging network hardware.

Technology Ongoing Work

The Technology Leadership team recognizes the importance various technologies play in facilitating the classroom learning experience. The Technology Department is committed to collaborating with district leadership and staff to identify technology needs that promote teaching and learning, while also balancing the financial burden with rapidly advancing technology.

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Southington High School

Richard Aroian, Principal

Enhancements

Transition to Block Scheduling: In the 2023-2024 academic year, Southington High School transitioned from a traditional eight-period schedule, with each period lasting 46 minutes, to a block schedule consisting of four 88-minute periods per day. This shift required extensive professional development for our staff. Building and department leaders concentrated on curriculum and professional development activities all year, aimed at enhancing student engagement. Surveys taken by teachers at the end of the year overwhelmingly supported this move and the positive impact block scheduling had on student progress.

Refinement of Career Pathways: Another key focus was the refinement of our Career Pathways program. Efforts were made to align the Program of Studies, Career Fair, Freshman Orientation, and other activities with our Pathways program, which provided a clear visual representation of the post-graduation experience for students. The high school received a grant-funded Career Pathways Liaison position to further support the student-centered focus. Mrs. Teresa Brooks, our Business teacher and DECA advisor took the position and will lead our move towards more credit-bearing and internship opportunities for students.

Development of the Teaching Assistant Program: The inaugural year of the Teaching Assistant program was successfully concluded. Over 40 juniors and seniors earned credits by assisting in courses with underclassmen. The program falls under the umbrella of our Career Pathways Liaison. These students engaged in regular communication with teachers, reinforced classroom expectations, supported student growth, and developed and presented lessons. Plans are underway to expand this internship program to impact all Pathways.

Expansion of Dual Enrollment Opportunities: The school was awarded the Dual Credit Expansion Grant (ARPA), which facilitated the expansion of Early College Experience (ECE) offerings. This grant enabled an increase in dual enrollment opportunities through enhanced partnerships with the University of Bridgeport, Central Connecticut State University, and Southern Connecticut State University. Many departments expanded their ECE and elective offerings, reflecting a broader range of dual enrollment and certification opportunities for students. Every opportunity for students to earn college credits during their years at Southington High School is a win for everyone.

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Vision Statements

Many of our departments are drafting their vision statements to guide their continued evolution. Under the leadership of Tony Loomis (Our Health/PE Department Leader) that department has developed the following guiding principles:

Vision Statement: *What we do...*

SHS graduates are committed to the pursuit of healthy and active skills to achieve lifelong physical, intellectual, emotional, and social wellness.

Mission Statement: *How we do it...*

The SHS HPE Department will engage all students in meaningful experiences to promote the development of health-enhancing behaviors through a challenging yet safe learning environment that emphasizes the importance of relationships and inspires students to seek lifelong wellness.

Technology Upgrades: In line with our commitment to a 21st Century vision, dozens of ViewSonic interactive displays were installed in classrooms. Over 80% of classrooms are now equipped with these advanced screens, which offer brighter, clearer visuals compared to the previous Smart Boards, and at a lower cost. We have now fully enhanced the technology in eleven of our fourteen departments through the installation of ViewSonic technology.

This comprehensive set of initiatives highlights Southington High School's dedication to enhancing educational experiences, student engagement, and technological integration.

Standardized Curricular Goals: During the 2023-2024 school year, all our departments successfully created learning goals with common learning targets and success criteria for each of the core classes. Several departments have begun identifying and utilizing standardized assessments to generate common data points. Our English Department now uses the CommonLit suite of assessments throughout the year to measure student reading ability. The Social Studies Department uses Newsela, the Science Department uses NGSS data, and the World Language Department uses the state Standards of Biliteracy for the same purpose.

Celebrations

Teacher of the Year: Mrs. Patricia Pettit, the Department Leader for the district's Multi-Lingual Department was honored with the Southington Teacher of the Year Award. We are very proud of Patty as she completed her transition from an English teacher to the point person addressing the needs of our rapidly growing multi-lingual student population.

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Certificate of Global Engagement

The Connecticut Department of Education announced that Southington High School is qualified to present the Certificate of Global Engagement to our students. The conditions of this certificate acknowledge students who have completed three years of coursework in a world language, four additional credits in courses of a global nature, and three years of extracurricular activities with an international focus. Students must also submit an action project to address a global problem. The global project requirement bears a striking resemblance to our Citizenship in Action project which we implemented six years ago. As graduates of a comprehensive high school, many of our students will now be eligible for this recognition.

Music: It was another tremendously successful year for our Southington High School music programs. Under the leadership of Sara Ossias and Harrison Stuppler, our Blue Knights Marching Band was the Division 4 Connecticut State champions and possibly even more impressive, finished second at the National competition. Our winter varsity Color Guard won the scholastic A MAC championship and our JV Color Guard was awarded the scholastic AAA championship.

Athletics: Our newly renovated Lady Knights' softball field made its debut this year as the team reached the state semi-finals. Our football and baseball teams also made the state semi-finals. Our Girls' Volleyball team made it to the state finals. Individually, senior basketball player Ryan Hammarlund reached the 1000 career point mark. Junior basketball player Lily Cooper is only 50 points short of the magic 1000-point mark. She should reach that milestone early in her senior year.

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KAREN SMITH ACADEMY

Jess Levin, Director

Thirteen KSA students earned their Southington High School Diploma in 2024. The Sophomore and Junior classes were significantly larger with fifteen and sixteen students respectively.

KSA staff and administration continued the ongoing work with our middle schools and high schools to ensure that the student referral process was seamless and working to support students in need of KSA. The communication and teamwork were tangible, and evident, and produced positive results for students.

KSA administration is continuing the work of curricular alignment with SHS and working with district instructional support staff on assessment, performance tasks, and the use of supplemental technology that supports the NGSS standards and framework. KSA is also trying to create more hands-on opportunities for students and hopefully, KSA students will be able to take advantage of the Career Pathways framework at SHS.

KSA is moving to a block schedule in the 24-25 school year. KSA is excited about the instructional opportunities this will give our teachers and a flexible learning model that will help students be successful. KSA is also offering Mandarin as the World Language option at KSA.

Attendance rates continue to improve at KSA, and chronic absenteeism is on the decline. This is attributed to consistent parent communication and clear, consistent messages to students about the importance of coming to school.

Our continued work will focus on the development of relevant, cohesive, meaningful assessments for KSA students and the continued evolution of our transition program for potential graduating Seniors, as well as new enrichment opportunities for all students during the FLEX block of our school day.

KSA welcomes three new staff members, Matt Ehmka will be teaching Art at KSA, Colleen Murphy will be teaching Health and PE and Xun Zheng will be teaching Chinese.

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JOSEPH A. DEPAOLO MIDDLE SCHOOL

Chris Palmieri, Principal

Broad Based Enhancements

DePaolo continued technology integration into the curriculum across all subjects. Teachers utilized the district's online learning platform, Canvas. ParentSquare was utilized as the main source of communication between school and families. The math progress monitoring program, iReady, was utilized for the second time this school year. A shift from STAR Reading to CommonLit was utilized for English Language Arts progress monitoring. CommonLit is a comprehensive literacy program with thousands of reading lessons, a full-year ELA curriculum, benchmark assessments, and standards-based data for teachers.

An additional special education teacher was added to the staff to meet the growing needs of students.

Grade 8 Spanish was connected to the three eighth-grade teams to further enhance the middle school teaming philosophy.

The TEAM Program was officially changed to the Therapeutic Learning Center (TLC). TLC is designed to provide students with a safe, predictable, and structured setting that will optimize their learning potential and focus on building the appropriate social and pragmatic skills necessary for success in the general education setting.

A math night was held on November 15, 2023. This allowed parents to preview some of the lessons that students experience daily as part of the Illustrative Mathematics curriculum.

All teachers fully utilized the State of CT Special Education data system, CT-SEDS.

Celebrations

DePaolo recognizes students in numerous ways. Aside from each team selecting a "Student of the Month," they also offer a variety of positive reinforcements for all students throughout the year. "Patriot Pride In Practice" is another way to recognize students for their positive behavior. Teachers nominate students for exceeding expectations in numerous areas according to behavioral norms established by "Patriot Pride." In addition, DePaolo hosted Principals' Breakfasts six times this year where families were invited to hear words of praise shared by teachers. Staff Shining Stars continued this year as a way to recognize staff that go above and beyond to assist their professional colleagues.

DePaolo Boys' Soccer Team celebrated an undefeated season. A banner recognizing this accomplishment hangs in the school gymnasium.

DePaolo held several fundraisers and themed events throughout the year. Over 200 DePaolo Students volunteered their time in the school booth at the Apple Harvest Festival to raise funds for Pediatric Cancer research. Students raised \$4,250 that was donated to Alex's Lemonade Stand Foundation over the two weekends of the Festival. Students also volunteered to ring the bell for the Salvation Army during the holiday season. Unity Day, which occurred on October 18, 2023, brought the school community together to show unity for kindness, acceptance, and inclusion and to send a visible message that no child should ever experience bullying. A toiletry drive was conducted in November and all items were donated to the Veteran's home in Rocky Hill. DePaolo's annual pajama day fundraiser to raise money for the Connecticut Children's Medical Center cancer unit occurred in December. DePaolo donated \$2,240 for this event. DePaolo also raised over

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\$2,000 for YMCA Camp Sloper at the annual Sloper Plunge. The school community organized a challenge to collect canned food to assist Community Services and donated 925 cans.

Aside from traditional concerts offered by music students, members of the band, chorus, and orchestra performed at several community events. DePaolo (in partnership with Kennedy Middle School) also produced the Broadway musical “Sister Act” in April.

Students in seventh and eighth grade were inducted in a ceremony into the National Junior Honor Society held on December 4, 2023. This was the first induction ceremony held since before the pandemic.

The second annual “Poetry and Prose” evening was held in June.

DePaolo recognized 79 students at the eighth-grade annual awards night in June.

In June, a class day and a class night for 8th-grade students were held in celebration of the students’ three years in middle school.

Ongoing Work

Social Justice work continued this year. DePaolo’s lobby display was updated. After polling all DePaolo students, flags were purchased to represent the countries where all current students were born. DePaolo also celebrated many different families with a “Taste of Culture” event which was held in February. The PTO sponsored a program for all students on April 26, 2024, put on by the Zuzu Acrobats. This was an exciting assembly that shared about the vibrant African culture, including teaching some Swahili phrases, to our students.

Emotional Intelligence activities were offered throughout the school year. Aside from implementing RULER strategies outlined by the Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence, teachers found ways to ensure the emotional well-being of their students. Research has shown that healthy emotional regulation has an impact of less stress, better health, and positive relationships. A school-wide Charter was created to build a positive emotional climate by documenting how everyone would like to feel while in the school.

Over 200 students were involved in DePaolo’s Leadership Program. After being trained in communication, team building, and leadership, all students were selected from a variety of clubs and activities in the school and the community. Some of the community activities included DePaolo students volunteering at Zion Nursery School, the Calendar House, and Hatton Elementary School. The Animal Helpers cared for eggs that hatched several baby chicks in April 2024. The students then moved the chickens to the new chicken coop that was funded through a grant received from the Main Street Foundation and the Southington Education Foundation.

During the 23-24 school year, DePaolo continued to offer Advisory lessons to all students. Advisory teachers and groups remain the same from year to year as another way to foster strong relationships. Thirteen lessons were delivered to the students over the year. The lesson topics included team building, gratitude to others, bullying prevention, goal setting, life skills and career exploration, communication, and further development of their emotional vocabulary to support the Emotional Intelligence initiative.

Teachers across all academic and unified arts departments focused on instructional strategies that support responsive teaching. Following each professional learning session on responsive teaching, teachers in each department integrated newly learned strategies and tools into their curriculum and assessments.

Superintendent's Annual Report 2023-2024 – Joseph A. DePaolo Middle School

During April and May students in Textiles & Culinary Arts worked on various community service projects to benefit Veterans Are Heros Forever from Wolcott, CT. Students made and then provided over sixty hand-sewn and stuffed pillows along with cookies and other refreshments for an event that was held at DePaolo on June 1, 2024.

Additional academic support was offered every day during the school day for students to have the opportunity to receive additional support from various teachers. This time, called CORE (Creative Opportunities for Reinforcement and Enrichment) was used to strengthen student learning, especially related to our Language Arts and Math curriculum. Below are some of the benefits of this reallocated time:

- Provided additional activities for students to strengthen math skills as well as reading and/or writing fluency.
- Designated time for teachers to create individualized learning plans for each student to support growth and achievement in math.
- Created opportunities for Language Arts teachers to conference individually with students and check in on progress.
- Allowed teachers to help students who may be struggling with a particular topic (especially if students were not able to stay after school for extra help).
- Provided time for teachers to strengthen organizational and executive functioning skills with students.
- The specified time for students to get caught up on missing graded classwork after absences.

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JOHN F. KENNEDY MIDDLE SCHOOL

Susanne Vitcavage, Principal

Enhancements

The KBlock intervention/enrichment block continued to provide an opportunity for students to extend their learning outside of regularly scheduled class time. Tiered instruction in literacy and math, extra learning support to students with individualized educational plans, and Advisory lessons were delivered during KBlock. The greatest advantage of KBlock allowed students who received tier two instruction in literacy and math or extra learning support for students with individualized educational plans an opportunity to do so during KBlock in place of having to drop another class to receive such intervention.

Numerous extra-curricular clubs, activities, and sports continued to provide students with many opportunities after school. After-school activities were well attended. Students were able to develop a club of their liking if such a club did not already exist.

In October, Mr. John Halligan presented a powerful presentation, Ryan's Story, to students sharing his own family's heartbreaking story of bullying/cyberbullying. He spoke to students about how to recognize signs of teenage suicide and how to get help when needed. In December, Mrs. Megan Albanese, STEPS Prevention Coordinator, presented a lesson to eighth graders on the dangers of vaping. In January, SPS Sgt. Brian Leppard and Mrs. Albanese presented to students about online safety and the impact social media has on students' emotional well-being.

Coach Khandis Miller, a JFK para educator, reinstated Unified Sports at JFK. With grant funding from CAS, practices and competitions were held during the winter season with over twenty students participating, which led them to competitions in New Britain, Berlin, and Meriden.

In May, for the second year, several JFK students attended the annual Student-Manufacturer Connection Fair at the State Capital. Students met with manufacturers to learn about high-tech careers. Many local manufacturing companies were represented and provided hands-on activities and displays to introduce students to various career paths.

As modeled in Building Thinking Classrooms, the use of vertical whiteboards in math classes at JFK was universal. Students worked together to solve and discuss math problems collaboratively, which made it easier to see and understand the steps involved.

Students earned Kennedy Ka\$h for displaying the tenets of Eagle Excellence (be safe, be responsible, be respectful). Dairy Queen of Southington and Mike Defeo of Coke Northeast partnered with JFK to provide incentives for students who earned Kennedy Ka\$h. Many JFK families and several local businesses also supported JFK with donations for enrichment activities and school awards and recognition, including Eagle Excellence and Student of the Month, throughout the year.

JFK parent, Bridgeport Police Officer Diala Roberts, presented a generous donation to JFK on behalf of the Bridgeport Police Department. For the second year, she sold Autism Awareness patches and donated a portion of the proceeds to JFK. The donation was shared with members of the special education department at JFK for the purchase of classroom materials.

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JFK's Instagram page (JFKMS06479) continued to provide snapshots of numerous school events during the school year, celebrating many everyday and special events at JFK.

Celebrations

A well-attended Open House set the pace for a school year filled with many exciting highlights.

October highlights included a successful run at the Apple Harvest Road Race by JFK Cross Country team members. JFK Peer Advocates attended a STEPS training event at Camp Sloper. The first Advisory lesson focused on teamwork. On Unity Day, students and staff dressed in orange to prevent bullying while promoting kindness, acceptance, and inclusion.

The volleyball team raised over \$500 at their annual Dig Pink match against JAD. All proceeds were donated to breast cancer research. JFK Supported several local organizations throughout the year including Bread for Life, Youth Services, Southington's Food Pantry, and the Prudence Crandall Center, among others.

Sixth grader Ryan King was a featured guest on the Tamron Hall Show in New York City for his ingenious invention (as a fifth grader) that helps parents safely lay their babies in a Pack and Play.

In November, eighth-grade students participated in the Grit'N Wit challenge which included a variety of physical and mental team-building activities. This full-day competitive event was well received by students and is slated to become an annual event at JFK.

Our local veterans, Steve Pintarich, Wayne White, Dave Brennan, and Lou Urso, shared their stories of their service to our country with all students. The annual Veteran's Day concert and celebration was a success. JFK students invited veterans to attend this appreciation event with them. The JFK band, orchestra, and chorus performed, and a reception was held in the media center. Mr. Ryan Hartt, social studies teacher and brother of a veteran, emceed this special event.

The Eagle Engineers, JFK's FIRST Robotics team, advanced to the state finals after securing the highest score in a match and earning the Champions Award. The Champions Award, the most prestigious award of the competition, celebrates a team that embodies the FIRST Lego League Challenge experience, by fully embracing the core values while achieving excellence and innovation in robot performance, robot design, and the Innovation Project.

In December, The Eagle Engineers received The Judges' Award at the state finals competition. The award was given to the team that excelled in all areas of the competition, including core values, the Innovation Project, robot design, and match score, but also had something "extra" that judges felt the team deserved to be recognized for. This was an amazing accomplishment, especially with the tough competition and stricter judging criteria. There were over 140 First Lego League teams in the state and the top 48 were at the finals. Only fifteen awards were given during the competition.

JFK students raised over \$650 for patients at Connecticut Children's Medical Center by participating in the annual PJ Day for a Cause.

Music filled the air at JFK during December. Concerts were well attended and highlighted the musical talent our students possess. Festive morning entertainment during the Twelve Days of Holiday Fun brightened up the halls as the students entered school each morning.

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In January, Reverend Sharon Holt and the First Baptist Church of Southington honored eighth grader Lyla Gilbert as the recipient of the church's Martin Luther King, Jr. Award.

Deputy Fire Chief Glenn Dube presented a lesson on heat transfer to sixth graders and reviewed safety skills with students in the event of a fire.

In February, some eighth graders were randomly chosen to participate in the NAEP (National Assessment of Educational Progress) exam.

In conjunction with Calendar House, the annual Intergenerational Valentine's Day dance was held. This collaborative event brought many senior citizens and NJHS and chorus members together for an afternoon of dancing, pizza, and fun.

In March, JFK was selected to participate in Quinnipiac University's Big Event. Current Quinnipiac and alumni students performed a community service activity at JFK and freshened up the halls of the counseling area with new paint.

Sixth grader Elijah Pelletier was awarded 2nd place in the Elks Lodge writing contest that he entered in September. The topic was the Bill of Rights and What it Means to You.

In April, several students were recognized at a Board of Education meeting for receiving honors for their Connecticut Invention Convention submissions.

In May, local veteran Steve Pintarich was recognized at JFK by the State Department of Education for his contributions to JFK and the Southington community in educating students about Veterans Day, Memorial Day, and so much more. Mrs. Amy Perry, a social studies teacher, had submitted Mr. Pintarich's name and accomplishments to the state for consideration of the award. May 13, 2024, was officially declared Steve Pintarich Day in Southington.

Dominik Milewski and Kaden Beaudoin won first and second place honors, respectively, for their submitted patriotism essays in the American Legion essay contest. They were recognized publicly at the American Legion by the American Legion Kiltonic Post 72 Ladies Auxiliary.

Ongoing Work

Continued implementation of JFK's three-year SRBI plan focused on providing teachers with effective tools and strategies to strengthen differentiation and tier-one instruction in all areas. During team meetings, teachers collaboratively reviewed data to determine student needs as a priority for intervention during KBlock time. Teams met weekly to discuss and monitor student progress. Professional development in the areas of differentiation and responsive teaching was provided for all teachers.

One of the most valuable changes made at JFK was isolating math and literacy SRBI meetings. Instead of meeting once a week to discuss both math and literacy with SRBI teams as had been done for so many years in the past, each team met two weeks with admin each month, one week with a specific focus on math and the other with a specific focus on literacy.

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The Vision of the Graduate continued to be a focus at JFK. Teachers made a conscious effort to integrate the Four Cs (communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and creativity) into all content areas, necessary skills for postgraduate success. The Vision of the Graduate is posted in each academic area and around JFK's halls.

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WALTER A. DERYNOSKI ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Jan Verderame, Principal

School Accomplishments

The 2023-2024 school year at Walter A. Derynoski Elementary School was filled with learning and excitement. The Derynoski Community came together with our monthly family fun nights sponsored by the PTO. Families enjoyed watching movies and playing bingo together along with many other fun events. Along with our nightly events, students enjoyed a monthly whole-school celebration. These events included making a craft, watching a movie, playing a trivia game, and enjoying a beach day. It was a bonding experience that students and staff looked forward to each month. The school continued with their One School, One Book Event with this year's title being "The World According to Humphrey." Students read or listened to their teachers/administrators read to them each night. The classes answered questions about the book and the winning classes enjoyed a visit from Hank, our guinea pig. Each student had the opportunity to take their class "stuffed Humphrey" home and journal what their family did with him.

In the academic areas, Derynoski classroom teachers integrated strategies and best practices in instruction to align with the "science of reading." Teachers built their capacity in the new DIBELS Assessment throughout the year. They learned how to administer and analyze the data with this new assessment. Teachers focused on building students' foundational skills using discrete, explicit instruction. Integration of decodable texts were used to support the generalization of these foundational skills. Teachers in kindergarten through fifth grade planned and executed small group lessons based on data received from assessments to meet all students' needs. Small groups were seen in both reading and math. Math stations were integrated into the classrooms to target math concepts. A continued instructional focus included enhancing both communication and collaboration to align with the Vision of a Graduate. The classroom teacher targeted the 4 C's (critical thinking, communication, creativity, and collaboration) in multiple ways in the classroom to support student's independence and higher-level thinking skills. Social-emotional learning continued to be an important component of learning using the RULER Program. With the continued implementation of the RULER Program, students continued to grow their emotional intelligence. To establish positive classroom communities, individual classroom charters were developed by students and teachers. Lessons provided students with the skills to recognize, understand, label, express, and regulate emotions. Each week the counseling and physical education staff shared strategies to support the social and emotional well-being of staff and students through Mindfulness Mondays, Tranquil Tuesdays, and Wellness Wednesdays. The School Safety Plan was updated and reviewed with all staff. First responders were present at both fire, secure school, and lockdown drills to provide feedback and attended committee meetings in the building. Teachers planned a strategy for Lockdown situations in classrooms and in other areas of the building.

This year Derynoski incorporated a new Positive Behavior Program to target Responsive Classroom concepts and align with the RULER Program. Posters were placed in every area of the school using the school charter vocabulary stating the expectations in various settings. Students were able to earn "Dragon Hugs" for noted positive behaviors during the school day.

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Students could “cash in” their hugs for various incentives. Derynoski families were presented with this new program during Open House in the fall.

The Derynoski PTO continued to support students and staff through the funding of materials and providing volunteers for the many events they planned for the school community. This year the PTO continued their support for our staff with a special monthly recognition. Due to the success of fundraising this year, the PTO was able to provide the school with scholastic news for all students in all grade levels along with supporting classroom furniture, field trips, recess equipment, books, and other classroom materials.

Celebrations/Diversity

Our 5th grade students honored our local veterans in a ceremony in the auditorium for Veteran's Day which ended with each class completing the “white table” ceremony. Students spearheaded many fundraisers this year to support the greater community. Derynoski sponsored scholarships for the YMCA along with providing families in need with financial support for summer camp. Derynoski had a large Polar Plunge Team and raised over \$1,500. Derynoski students were recognized as *Heroes Among Us* for their charitable work. Examples of this work included students who in lieu of birthday presents made donations to a charity or would spearhead a lemonade stand to raise money for Bread for Life. Students grew their hair long to cut it to donate to Locks for Love. Derynoski Boys & Girl Scouts donated their time to make the school grounds beautiful with a Saturday and evening clean-up day.

A focus on cultural awareness continued this year with diversity workshops led by Mr. Paul Vivian and Dr. Audley Donaldson for third and fifth-grade students. These workshops provided students with practical experiences to examine diversity in everyday life. The STEPS/Emotional Intelligence and Positive Behavior Programs continued to promote our positive school culture where kindness and acceptance were the expectation. Our STEPS leadership program had over sixty students who continued to share target assets and strategies to promote inclusion at Derynoski. Various activities were completed in each classroom to align with our STEPS and RULER Program.

Kindergarten

The kindergarten team began their own research and learning with the Science of Reading. The team researched and successfully piloted the University of Florida Phonics Program, UFLI to build students' foundational skills. The data collected in phonics revealed amazing results as measured on the DIBELS Assessment. Our school has the highest percentage of students “above benchmark” compared to district results. This explicit, systematic approach to phonics aligned with the Science of Reading and common core standards. Students incorporated these skills in all areas of the curriculum specifically writing, to make the shift as seamless as possible. Students also made great gains in math. Differentiated, small group work in Math and ELA allowed the team to address the specific needs of the kindergarten learners. Through partner and small group work, students learned how to collaborate and communicate during lessons. This experience in lessons contributed to their increased academic achievement. The kindergarten team had a great year!

Grade 1

The adjusted reading and writing workshop curriculum was followed with fidelity. The first grade embraced the challenge of blending the previous English Language Arts (ELA) curriculum with the new materials to better align with the Science of Reading. This year first grade attended multiple professional development trainings on incorporating the Science of Reading into the current ELA curriculum. The team is excited about the new ELA curriculum for the fall that will incorporate the science of reading. Another component that the first-grade team received professional development on was integrating decodable texts. The teachers incorporated the decodable texts along with leveled texts in small groups and shared reading to generalize the discrete skills taught in the classroom. Small group reading instruction using mostly decodable texts was a big shift from leveled reading instruction. With this shift in instructional practice, the first grade team has noted a significant increase in students' growth from previous years.

Writing instruction included narrative, informational writing, as well as opinion genres. Students worked hard to edit and revise their work. Grammar was a focus with students having them understand the structure of a sentence. Every day the students were involved in explicit instruction and activities that allowed them to work with partners and small groups as well as teacher-guided small group instruction to reinforce the skills taught. Phonological Awareness assessments were used to measure growth throughout the year.

The Ready Math curriculum continued to be implemented incorporating math stations to individualize student needs. The math groups were differentiated to meet the needs of all unique learners with a focus on problem-solving, collaboration, communication, and critical thinking.

Grade 2

This year the second grade team has implemented the Science of Reading core concepts into literacy instruction and small groups. Decodable text materials have been put to use during iBlock and Reader's Workshop. The team has used the "looking through a mirror or window" idea to connect reader's with daily read-alouds. Patterns of Power lessons as well as modified Teacher's College phonics lessons were explicitly taught in both whole group and small flex groups to support reading and writing growth throughout the year.

The second-grade team has implemented modified Reader's and Writer's Workshop lessons that have been more aligned with the Science of Reading. In the area of writing, students wrote for different audiences and created a variety of writing such as personal narrative stories, and informational pieces including reports, opinion, brochures, and newsletters. The Math Workshop model was followed with differentiated stations and i-Ready pathway lessons.

The science units were implemented. These units consisted of learning sequences that aligned with the NGSS and engaged students in inquiry, engineering design, and problem-solving.

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Students began their days with morning meetings with a focus on Emotional Intelligence lessons, Mentor texts and everyday examples that were read and discussed to help students navigate through social situations during their school day.

Grade 3

The third-grade team continued rigorous small-group instruction this year. Elements of the Science of Reading have driven the planning of small reading groups while maintaining a focus on Units of Study skills as well. Small group instruction occurs daily during writing and math. Data analysis from both formative and summative assessments drive the team's planning and instruction.

In the language arts area, the third-grade team continued to grow following multiple in-service workshops. Teachers became facilitators of both Reading and Writing Workshop, while also integrating the core skills measured by the DIBELS assessment. Professional development in more skill-based reading skills was the focus which included syllabication/decoding and fluency was integrated into our small group and whole group instruction. In addition, the team continued vocabulary instruction and homegrown lessons for phonics. Students were enthusiastic participants in Word Love lessons and Word Study Lessons. Kelly Lavery provided coaching and co-teaching opportunities (in large and small groups) for all teachers to select what best fits their needs and the needs of their students. In addition to composing texts in the genres of narrative, informational, and opinion writing, teachers provided the opportunity for students to publish and present texts in various modes, including handwriting, Google Docs, Google slideshows, and speeches.

In Math, the teachers started the year reflecting on data and adjusted classroom instruction to increase student success. The team continued to implement the Math Workshop model while integrating the iReady resources. Through training with the specialists and data analysis, teachers revisited the "Three Reads" process to use during math mini-lessons. Adjustments in math workshop stations were implemented to create more targeted skills groups, based on the iReady Diagnostic and Smarter Balanced results.

The third-grade team continued to implement our three science units this year. In addition, teachers added the NGSS standards that are measured on the Smarter Balanced Assessments to lessons. To support this, students took IABs that aligned with each unit as a whole and in small groups. This work encouraged exploration and the use of the 4C's to foster student growth.

Staff communication with families continues to be a focus with the third-grade team. All third-grade teachers were using Parent Square. Newsletters, Padlets, videos, and photos to help keep families informed and engaged with the learning community.

Grade 4

This year the fourth grade team began to implement the Science of Reading practices into daily instruction. Teachers continued to enhance their skills within the literacy block through the support of literacy coaches, literacy specialists, and professional development. The fourth-grade team explicitly targeted small groups based on DIBELS data and utilized Amplify resources to support students in the areas of decoding, fluency, literal comprehension, higher-order comprehension, and written responses. All classrooms incorporated the Word Love program, which supplemented the reading units and gave students opportunities to acquire knowledge of unknown words. A new word study program was embedded to target phonics skills and enhance decoding practices. All classrooms utilized the iBlock instructional period to target written response work utilizing a variety of resources including technology. Teachers also assessed student progress using learning progressions and having students provide self and peer feedback. Grand conversations were implemented into the balanced literacy block allowing students an opportunity for collaboration, critical thinking, and communication. Within the classrooms, students were highly engaged with a variety of hands-on science experiments that allowed students to effectively explore abstract concepts with a tactile approach. This led to a collaborative learning environment where students created hypotheses, took risks, and analyzed their outcomes together. Student discourse was prevalent throughout the units as they investigated a variety of topics including biomimicry, energy, and erosion. This year in Social Studies, students began by learning some important map skills and then went on to explore four out of the five major regions of the United States including the Southeast, Midwest, Southwest, and the West. In each of these units, students learned about the major geographical features of the region and were able to identify them using maps, globes, models, computer programs, and texts. Students also studied the different governing bodies, the major historical events, and the economics of each region. Within the units, students used critical thinking to identify the main ideas of historical information and compare past and present situations. By the end of all the units, students understood the rights and responsibilities of citizens in a democratic society. Students also understood how different items made in these regions are produced. This year in math, students expanded their knowledge of multi-digit multiplication and division, along with fractions and decimals. Students demonstrated critical thinking and problem-solving skills as they collaborated during math centers. These centers provided ample opportunities for students to work together and practice current skills, revisit previously learned concepts, and challenge each other's thinking. Furthermore, students consistently worked on their iReady pathway, which differentiates instruction to meet student's individual needs. To support our student's emotional well-being, students continued to practice self-regulation strategies as we embarked on another year of implementing the RULER program. All classes began each day with a Morning Meeting to build the classroom community and relationships among peers. During this time, students engaged in conversations, problem-solved, and shared ideas with their peers. Mood Meters and Strategy Walls hung in all of our 4th-grade classrooms. A designated area for our Cozy Corner was provided in all classrooms, giving students a safe space to take a break. Fourth grade had a great year of learning and growing!

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Grade 5

Grade 5 teachers received coaching from literacy coaches, and nearly all of our professional development revolved around small-group instruction in language arts. The team integrated this extensive training into daily instruction, including iBlock and language arts. Wordlove, Word Study, and phonics were also integrated into language arts instruction. The fifth grade team taught the language arts curriculum with fidelity and embraced the integration of concepts from the Science of Reading. Students read and analyzed narrative, informational, and fantasy texts. Identification of themes, main idea, and cause and effect were some of the target learning strategies for these genres. Integration of the learning progressions and opportunities for self-assessment facilitated student ownership of learning. The team worked closely with the literacy coach in reviewing best practices for groups, student discourse, and critical thinking. In writing, narrative, fantasy, research, opinion, and memoirs were some of the areas of focus. In the math area, data collected from the iReady program, pathways, and other formative assessments, were analyzed to plan and execute differentiated instruction, including stationwork. Students communicated and collaborated within math centers via partnerships. Students enjoyed continued inquiry-based science lessons aligning with the NGSS model, with updated space systems and separate Invention Convention Units. Students developed their inventions for the Invention Convention and many of Derynoski's students went to the state and national levels. Social Studies began with The Kid Governor program and culminated with students participating in the statewide election. We added a field trip to the Old State House that reviewed all of the Kid Governor lessons. The developmental asset building blocks of the STEPS program could be seen throughout our classrooms. The RULER Program was implemented with fidelity and enhanced our STEPS program. The C3 STEPS program took place in the fall and was taught by Officer Verab from the Southington Police Department.

Library-Media

Over the 2023-2024 school year, the Derynoski Library has continued to be a thriving hub of knowledge, fostering a love for reading and exploration among the students. Here's a review of its success:

Diverse Collection: One of the hallmarks of the Derynoski Library is the diverse collection of books. From classic tales to contemporary literature, the shelves are stocked with a wide array of genres, catering to the varied interests and reading levels of the Derynoski student body. Whether a child seeks adventure in fantasy, historical fiction, or has an interest in non-fiction, there's a book waiting to spark his or her curiosity.

Digital Citizenship: One of the key highlights of this year's library initiatives has been teaching all students to be good digital citizens. We have noted positive changes in students' behavior and

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attitude towards online activities. Through engaging lessons from Common Sense Media, students have learned responsibility and awareness is associated with digital platforms.

Research & Information Literacy: In today's rapidly evolving world, the ability to navigate vast amounts of information and discern reliable sources is an essential skill for success in any field. By introducing these skills at the elementary level, we are equipping our students with the tools they need to thrive. All students learned how to research a topic of interest. The 4th and 5th-grade students presented their information through a “Living Wax Museum”.

Innovative Designing: The Derynoski students have been actively engaged in coding activities, and their enthusiasm and aptitude for this field have been truly remarkable. Students had the opportunity to code Dash and Dot Robots. Students also participated in “Hour of Code” while using Code.org.

Ongoing Work & School Improvement

Derynoski's work next year will focus on the continued alignment with the science of reading in all grade levels. With the new Benchmark Literacy Program, a focus will include building the teachers' capacity in kindergarten, first and second grade in this new initiative. Explicit coaching by the Literacy District Team will support this goal. A continued focus on differentiated, small-group instruction in all grade levels will occur to increase student achievement. Coaching in the Math area will focus on the intermediate grade levels to incorporate rigorous strategies to increase student achievement. The third year of the three-year SRBI plan will be implemented with adjustments incorporated from the DBI training that the district received last school year. The integration of the 4 C's (Critical Thinking, Collaboration, Communication, and Creativity) will be enhanced in the classrooms to ensure higher-level learning in all content areas. To increase classroom community and overall school climate, incorporating the combined STEPS and RULER programs into daily lessons will be a focus. Safety protocols will continue to be a consistent message for all staff. Training will occur before school with follow-up throughout the school year.

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FLANDERS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Katie T. Guerrette, Principal

School Accomplishments

Flanders Elementary School has consistently provided students with a safe, supportive environment for learning and personal growth. Flanders celebrated its 19th Annual Veterans Day Ceremony with an in-person event, inviting family members who have served in our armed forces. The school celebrated our national heroes with a beautiful ceremony filled with student performances, songs, and poems. Social-emotional learning remains a daily priority in every classroom, with students utilizing the RULER approach and Mood Meter to identify and understand emotions in themselves and others. The classroom charters further support this by setting clear expectations for how we want to feel in school. Flanders also hosted its Second Annual Flanders Flash Color Dash, a fun-filled event combining fitness and fundraising for the Flanders PTO. Funds raised at this event allow the Flanders PTO to provide all students and staff with two Flanders Spiritwear T-shirts during the year, provide in-school cultural events, reduce the cost of field trips for our students and families, and provide many after-school fun PTO events for families! In addition, Flanders School extends its supportive flair to the broader community through various fundraising efforts such as the Annual SOUPer Bowl Food Drive for Bread for Life, Pajama Day for the Connecticut Children's Foundation, and the Sloper Plunge for YMCA Camp Sloper. Flanders Elementary is deeply committed to fostering both academic excellence and social-emotional growth for all its students.

Celebrations

Flanders School held the seventh annual ***One School, One Book*** with the whole community reading Friendship According to Humphrey by Betty G. Birney. This shared literacy experience was a wonderful way to build the home-school connection and promote family literacy. Throughout the event, families were assigned chapters to read, trivia questions were posed at school, and students were entered into weekly raffles to win books and prizes. We especially enjoyed having our very own Humphrey the Hamster living in the Flanders Office! The Flanders PTO continued to support the school and make Flanders a wonderful place for students and staff. The PTO generously sponsored a cultural arts program this year with Rob Surette - Hero Art, where we watched him create masterpieces through speed painting while storytelling about the historical significance of the subject! Thanks to the PTO's generosity, we were also able to add a new painting of Abraham Lincoln to our Hero Art Collection!

Kindergarten

Kindergarten students worked on becoming strong readers and writers this school year. Students engaged in phonological awareness activities to build a strong foundation in their literacy skills. An important focus in phonics helped support students in their decoding and encoding skills. They applied this new knowledge to their everyday reading and writing. In math, kindergarteners were challenged during math stations where they learned to add and subtract fluently through

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five and build number sense. Students learned to navigate relationships, solve conflicts with their peers throughout the day, and build independence. Students learned to use the mood meter to plot their feelings daily.

Grade 1

First-grade students had a wonderful year of growth. First graders strengthened their decoding and encoding skills by becoming both word detectives and word builders in reading and phonics. Students deepened their understanding of place value and learned various addition and subtraction strategies by practicing word problems and engaging in hands-on learning through math centers. Students had many discussions about emotions and feelings through read-alouds and the use of the Mood Meter. The first graders also had an exciting field trip to the Beardsley Zoo where students observed many different animals and their habitats.

Grade 2

Second grade had a busy year! Students wrote for a variety of purposes and audiences and enjoyed writing poetry to express what is important to them. Students became experts on reading fluency and comprehension strategies. Reading series books was a highlight to study character development. Math focused on adding and subtracting three-digit numbers and measurement. Second graders enjoyed our Science Units that focus on the states of matter, beaver habitats, and plant needs. The students were very excited to go on a field trip to Camp Sloper where they applied what they had learned in the Science curriculum through hands-on activities. Second graders became proficient at using the Mood Meter daily to support self-regulation and would check in and share their feelings in both morning meetings and closing circles.

Grade 3

Third graders explored the changing Earth through fossils in the Grand Canyon and spent a day at the Connecticut Historical Society and Museum learning about life in colonial Connecticut, Connecticut's industry, Famous Nutmeggers, and the legend of the Charter Oak. In literacy, the focus was to foster a love of reading through fiction, character development, and learning to enjoy informational texts. Third graders were empowered to voice opinions through persuasive writing and entertained them with creative narratives. Math skills were strengthened in multiplication, fractions, and rounding. Overall, third grade was transformative as students gained knowledge in geography, literacy, writing, and mathematics, developing confidence and critical thinking skills for the future.

Grade 4

Fourth-grade students had a wonderful year of school. Students explored our Land and Water Unit, focusing on the Oso Landslide. Students created stream tables to test out their hypothesis and found the cause! Through Writer's Workshop, students wrote for a variety of purposes in multiple genres, including opinion, informational, and narrative. In Reader's Workshop, students focused on fiction, identifying character traits and how those traits are tried and true. In math,

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students used math centers to push their thinking and used iReady to support their mathematical needs. Students continued to expand on social-emotional learning with The Mood Meter, Second Step, and class discussions.

Grade 5

Fifth-grade students embraced a variety of enriching learning experiences this year. They explored government through participation in the CT Kid Governor program and brought history to life by creating a Colonial America Living Museum. Students explored science utilizing the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS). Through participation in the CT Invention Convention, students learned problem identification, problem-solving, entrepreneurship, and creativity skills. Our community is proud to share that one of our students even qualified for the National Level of Invention Convention. Reader's and Writer's Workshop fostered meaningful discussions that expanded their grasp of the ELA curriculum, while a visit to Mystic Aquarium gave them the chance to apply their skills in argument and advocacy in a real-world context. Math learning came to life through the workshop model and engaging centers, making the curriculum relevant and practical. Additionally, through the STEPS and C3 programs, students strengthened classroom relationships by practicing empathy, problem-solving, and learning to be upstanders.

Ongoing Work and School Improvement

Flanders will maintain its commitment to a continuous growth model, using data-driven decision-making in both academic and social-emotional learning to tailor instruction and opportunities that meet the needs of every student. The school's focus on small group, differentiated instruction in language arts and mathematics has proven highly successful in addressing individual student needs, and these effective practices will continue moving forward. Flanders also remains dedicated to fostering a safe, respectful, and positive learning environment, where kindness and hard work are core values.

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WILLIAM H. HATTON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Robert Garry, Principal

School Information

Hatton Elementary School remained committed to excellence in teaching and learning this year. The school theme was “Happy New Year” and encouraged students and teachers to focus on setting ambitious personal learning goals and creating action plans to achieve them. Our Opening Day festivities included a DJ, confetti, a countdown, and a ball drop before every class entered the building on the red carpet to the cheers of families and staff. The “New Year” theme remained alive all year as teachers worked with their students to set goals, monitor learning progress, and implement small steps to impact positive changes. Regular goal-setting conferences also increased students’ ownership of their learning.

The past year provided rich professional learning experiences for our staff. Classroom teachers engaged in ongoing professional development throughout the year with reading and numeracy specialists as well as onsite coaching to enhance their teaching practices. Teachers partnered with our math specialist to closely examine student data to develop instructional groups in and across classrooms, as well as incorporate instructional strategies from Building Thinking Classrooms. Professional development, modeling, and coaching work helped enhance our teachers’ math practices. Student engagement and collaboration increased through the use of vertical whiteboards, and random partnerships increased opportunities for our students to share their understanding with all peers. Teachers also partnered with our literacy specialists and coaches to deepen their understanding of the Science of Reading and incorporate research-based practices into their work with our students. The results across all grade levels were excellent, and we plan to build on these strengths in the year to come.

The Hatton staff maintains a focus on total involvement and continuous improvement. Teachers are members of one or more teams that focus on school improvement, data teams, SRBI, and Emotional Intelligence, and our membership includes both teachers and support staff. The Hatton SRBI team met regularly to review student achievement data and assist teachers in providing both intervention and acceleration for their students. We also worked with faculty from UCONN on a project called DBI (Data-based Individualization) as part of the Intensive Intervention Implementation Initiative. The work strengthened our data analysis and intervention practices and had positive impacts on students at every grade level.

In addition to encouraging teacher leadership, Hatton students were engaged in leadership development opportunities through the STEPS team and leadership assemblies, and participation with CT Association of Schools Leadership and Celebration of the Arts Conferences. The Hatton staff remains dedicated to supporting town initiatives including STEPS and the annual YMCA Polar Plunge, and our entire school community rallied behind students and staff members who had been impacted by challenging medical diagnoses.

One of our core strengths is our school learning community. The Hatton PTO continued to support the entire school community through enrichment activities, cultural arts programs, and a variety of family night events including book fairs, arts enrichment programs, bingo night, pizza

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cooking nights with the principal, monthly movie nights, an ice cream social and a pasta supper. The PTO supported literacy across the school through purchases for classroom libraries as well as keeping the book vending machine in our media center stocked with high-interest books for our students. The book vending machine remains a powerful incentive to recognize the positive efforts of our students each week. The PTO also purchased flexible seating for all classrooms, sponsored an outdoor reading garden, and provided a variety of school assemblies for all students. This dedicated group of parents continues to look for ways to improve the school experience for every student at Hatton. Regular connections and communication with families are an integral part of the work at Hatton. Families are engaged as partners in their student's learning and are provided opportunities to enhance student learning at home.

Celebrations

A highlight of this school year was the continuation of our One School, One Book project in coordination with our PTO. A copy of Mr. Popper's Penguins was provided for every family and a school-wide reveal was planned for the project roll-out. The roll-out celebration included a visit from Mystic Aquarium staff and a live penguin. Every student enjoyed a close-up visit with our guest penguin at an interactive assembly. Nightly activities consisted of virtual staff and local celebrity readers, trivia contests, in-school activities in all classrooms, and a cultural arts project day for all classes aligned to the theme of the book. The PTO sponsored a movie night for all families as a finale for the activity. While the Hatton Community benefited from this work, the project was also shared with other elementary schools as they too worked to incorporate one school - one book activity into their schools.

The Hatton Friday Phone Call was once again a favorite highlight for students and families. This weekly phone call to families by the school principal occurred right in the classroom to celebrate the success of an individual student. Students are recognized with tangible rewards that include a special gold coin to purchase their book from the Book Vending Machine in our library. Friday Phone Calls served as a great motivator for the students and remained a meaningful way to recognize and reinforce positive contributions to the school community. The continued positive impact of these calls reduced discipline issues and improved school culture. This practice has also been shared successfully with other Southington schools. Over 750 calls were made this year to the delight of Hatton families.

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Kindergarten

The kindergarten classes took an exciting and informative field trip in the Fall to Indian Rock Reserve. Students learned about the orchards and how apples grow. They also learned how to make apple cider and even tried it! The hayride was the highlight of this trip. The kindergarten classes participated with STEPS, which headed a school-wide “Warm Your Neighbor” project, collecting soup, oatmeal & hot cocoa for community organizations, including the Southington food pantry. Cards with greetings from Hatton School were also distributed with these items. The year concluded with students performing in a Flag Day and Graduation Program for their families. Kindergarten students also participated in a school-wide Field Day celebration in which they worked on team-building skills.

Grade 1

This year our team was in the cohort that began the second year of using both the Ready Classroom math resource and the Units of Study in Phonics. The First-Grade team worked with the math specialists to refine practices and differentiate for students. The first-grade team also collaborated closely with the Literacy Coach to implement the phonics units of study and begin unpacking the small group resource. In science, all three classes were able to incubate eggs to hatch chickens in the spring. It was highly engaging for the classes to see the process including candling the eggs to monitor development, all the way through to hatching. The development of the chicks and how they rapidly changed over three weeks also prompted great observations and discourse with the students. Each classroom also worked hard to build classroom community through the development of students' Emotional Intelligence created a class charter and used the mood meter daily. Each classroom was able to hold a Meet the Authors celebration to bring families in and share their student's writing from the whole year.

Grade 2

This year was very successful in second grade. The team benefitted from professional development on new math and reading strategies, and the changes in practices had positive impacts on our students. Building Thinking Classrooms provided enhanced learning opportunities for our students and increased both engagement and student discourse. We implemented the 3-station rotation and double-dipping strategies to enhance the learning experience for all students by grouping across all three classes during intervention blocks. All students met growth goals and our grade 2 team math achievement was among the highest in the district. This year we were also introduced to a new Phonics curriculum that included on-site coaching and several full-day PD sessions where the team was able to review data to better inform instructional strategies. The professional learning was invaluable, and as a team, all agreed that this program improves students' encoding and decoding skills tremendously. Students were encouraged to take charge of their learning by collaborating with their Rug Clubs. The team was very happy to engage with parents during conferences to set and review learning goals for their children and to come in to read to the students during Read Across America week.

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Grade 3

Third-grade students created maps of Connecticut to show the variety of skills associated with geography. Students also learned about Connecticut's government, economy, and its famous citizens. In science, students worked on inquiry-based units covering the topics of matter, forces, and heredity. They also worked to improve not only narrative stories but also informational writing skills, on top of learning how to craft an effective opinion piece. In math, the students increased their understanding of basic computation and tackled new concepts like multiplication, division, basic algebra, area, perimeter, and measurement. Finally, in reading the students worked to improve their responses to various texts in all areas, and teachers worked to incorporate close reads to boost comprehension skills. The grade three students showed flexibility, adaptivity, and perseverance during this challenging year.

Grade 4

Students were excited to visit YMCA Camp Sloper for hands-on science lessons. These lessons aligned with the erosion unit in our science curriculum. Students read and researched multiple texts focusing on the American Revolution and went on to write their own chapter books on the subject. In Math, students participated in centers to enhance learning and engagement while working through the new i-Ready resource "My Path" to assist with the reinforcement of past skills and concepts. In Social Studies students studied the various regions of the United States with a focus on geography, economy, and history of our country. Students also spent time this year focusing on their emotional intelligence by developing a class charter, and through various mini lessons based on the mood meter.

Grade 5

Grade 5 students participated in emotional intelligence activities throughout the year such as mood meter work, and even yoga. The 5th-grade classes also benefited from Diversity training workshops as well as two presentations through STEPS. Students were eager to participate in middle school transition days; Asset Day at Camp Sloper and a tour of DePaolo/JFK. In the classroom, Reptile Day, the Macy's Day parade, and Alma Thomas paintings were just three examples of project-based learning, STEM activities, and the arts. In addition, grade five students were STEPS leaders and Unified Sports coaches. Our students participated in multiple concerts this year, including chorus, band, and orchestra. We concluded the year with a field trip to the CT Science Center that included a day of exciting hands-on learning experiences. Our grade five students enjoyed a return to our traditional year-end celebrations as they transitioned to middle school as sixth graders. This was a meaningful culminating activity for the students and their families.

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URBIN T. KELLEY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Marilyn Kahl, Principal

ENHANCEMENTS

Integration of the fundamentals of The Science of Reading was once again the focus for teachers in grades K-2 this school year. All teachers continued to broaden their understanding and implementation of Tier I SRBI Interventions in literacy and mathematics. This included the utilization of a daily intervention block to support students' academic needs. Check-ins on the Mood Meter and the development of classroom charters supported the continued dedication to Emotional Intelligence. The SRBI leadership team created an online database to monitor student progress and worked with classroom teachers to design instruction to meet targeted areas. Kelley School's principal, special education teachers, and literacy specialist worked all year with members of UConn's NEAG School of Education on implementing Data-Based Individualization (DBI) strategies and tools to better meet the needs of Kelley School students. The implementation of DIBELS Assessments provided teachers with in-depth knowledge of students' strengths and areas for improvement in phonological awareness, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension.

CELEBRATIONS

A dedicated Parent Teacher Organization supported the staff and students in many ways throughout the school year. The Kelley Elementary School PTO provided funds for field trips, in-school cultural events, carpets for classrooms, books for class libraries, and 5th-grade Recognition and Class Day at YMCA Camp Sloper. PTO-sponsored events were held throughout the year, including a Welcome Back Picnic, a town-wide Scavenger Hunt for families, Scholastic Book Fairs, a Holiday Fair, and Kelley School Field Day. The PTO also sponsored the KES Kindness Club and Art Club. Fifth-grade STEPS Ambassadors once again served as outstanding role models for all Kelley School students. They ran monthly Town Meetings educating all other students on the Asset of the Month and how to integrate assets into their daily lives. The Ambassadors also coordinated the Thanksgiving food drive benefiting Bread for Life and the annual "Soup-er Bowl" can/food drive benefiting Southington Community Services. Diversity workshops, under the direction of Mr. Paul Vivian and Dr. Reverend Audley Donaldson, were presented to third and fifth-grade students throughout the year. These engaging workshops focused discussions on important topics, including stereotypes, bullying, acceptance, and inclusion. Kelley School's Unified Sports Team once again provided students of all abilities the opportunity to work together in an athletic environment under the direction of Kelley Staff members who volunteer their time to this amazing program. This year also saw the return of Kelley School's Drama Club. Third, fourth, and fifth-grade students rehearsed for months and had two outstanding performances of *Frozen Jr.*

ONGOING WORK

Teachers in Grades K-2 will begin implementing the Benchmark Advanced Literacy program and will continue building their knowledge of the Science of Reading. Intermediate teachers in grades 3-5 will be exploring *Building Thinking Classrooms* in mathematics. Professional learning about the Science of Reading will also be provided to them. Continued integration of Data-Based Individualization (DBI) with current practices in SRBI will be a focus of the

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intervention support and analysis of student progress in literacy. Staff and students will also begin implementing the newly created STEPS/Emotional Intelligence curriculum into their morning meeting.

KINDERGARTEN

Kelley School's youngest learners benefited from a combination of structured play, centers-based instruction, and the continued focus on the workshop model in reading, writing, and mathematics. Teachers continued to train on the understanding of The Science of Reading (SOR) and implement structured lessons in phonological awareness. Extensive use of decodable texts supplemented the explicit instruction. Teachers collaborated to further advance their knowledge in the area of SOR to help meet the needs of their students. With the implementation of the SOR, students demonstrated significant growth in reading. Use of the iReady Pathway for individualized support and practice of math skills taught complemented math instruction daily. Students went on a field trip to Indian Rock Nature Preserve in the fall and had Curious Creatures come to Kelley School in the Spring to support our science units of study.

GRADE 1

Phonics, Readers' and Writers' Workshop instruction and success were driven by the Lucy Calkins Units of Study and resources. The first-grade team met for professional development with the literacy coaches throughout the year with a focus on deeper learning related to the Science of Reading. Workshops included a focus on the implementation of new decodable texts, including Daffodil Hill Press, Jump Rope Readers, and Flyleaf. Small group instruction was driven by DIBELS and other phonological awareness assessments. Decodables were used in place of leveled readers for all groups. Students continued to work in "Rug Clubs" and were able to participate in partnerships and small groups. The implementation of the updated Ready Classroom provided further differentiation of instruction and student work in mathematics. The children completed 45 minutes per week on "My Path" to maintain and strengthen their understanding of the skills taught. Math centers were used to enhance the curriculum and target specific student needs. Support from math specialists and results from the diagnostic assessments and unit tests throughout the year enhanced teacher understanding of this resource to maximize student growth. The end of the year culminated with the first grade annual Mother's Day program, a field trip to the Beardsley Zoo, and the chicks hatching as part of a science unit of study.

SECOND GRADE

Literacy instruction in grade 2 continued to be driven by the implementation of units of study in the Readers' and Writers' Workshop, including the phonics program. Professional learning sessions with the district literacy coach focused on the use of decodable texts to help strengthen students' phonics skills, as well as continued learning related to the Science of Reading. Building Blocks videos were used to support phonics instruction. New this year was the DIBELS assessment to measure and assess students' acquisition of literacy skills. Professional Development was provided to support the facilitation of this assessment and how it related to

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student performance and classroom instruction. Students used a program on the computer this year called Boost to help reinforce reading skills. The implementation of Math Workshop continued to have a positive impact on students' mathematics achievement in second grade. Math centers provided differentiated and engaging activities for students, with lessons aligned to the grade level curriculum and CCSS. In addition, students spent a minimum of 45 minutes on their I-Ready Pathway. This year I-Ready added Fluency Flight to its program to help strengthen students' math fluency for speed and accuracy. The implementation of I-Block allowed for differentiation, small group work, or 1-1 guided practice each day in reading, writing, or math. Science continued to provide many opportunities for problem-solving and hands-on learning. The approach to science is engineering-based and broken down into 3 units, The 4th Little Pig, Beavers, and the Koa Tree. The students enjoyed the hands-on activities that went along with each unit, and it allowed for all students to communicate & work together collaboratively. Second graders had a field trip to YMCA Camp Sloper, assisted LEAF in planting the raised bed gardens at Kelley, and had an enjoyable presentation about the history of Southington with a docent from the Barnes Museum this Spring.

THIRD GRADE

The continuation of Math Workshop in third grade had a positive impact on students' mathematics achievement over the school year. Differentiated student groups met at least twice a week allowing teachers to provide support or enrichment for students based on analysis of assessment data. The iReady Mathematics Pathway online program allowed students to work at their independent level for practice and reinforcement of skills taught during math instruction. Fluency Flight also provided students a platform to practice and develop proficiency with their math facts. Students engaged in higher-level discovery through the science curriculum. Third grade also made a shift to focus more on the Science of Reading, implementing explicit phonics lessons. These lessons provided direct instruction on a variety of phonics skills. Students did well with implementing what was taught into their work.

FOURTH GRADE

Readers Workshop consisted of units of study centered around characters, themes, and perspectives. In Writer's Workshop students focused on narratives, opinion essays, and informational essays. Fourth graders took a trip to YMCA Camp Sloper for hands-on experiences involving erosion that aligned with the Land and Water unit in science. Some of the activities included building a dam to save a village and completing a scavenger hunt on the trails. Students were also introduced to the idea of biomimicry-that humans mimic nature in their designs. They compared and contrasted energy transfer in the natural and designed worlds focusing on how electric currents, light, and sound are received and perceived by both. At the end of the unit, students identified how an existing device mimics the natural world and provided one way they could make the device better using biomimicry. In Social Studies, the year ended with a final state float project where students demonstrated their understanding of the US regions. A field trip to Mystic Seaport also provided students the opportunity to take a step back in time and experience life in Colonial New England.

FIFTH GRADE

Fifth graders again benefited from departmentalized instruction this year. Students switched classes for math and reading instruction. This provided consistency of instruction in these areas, as well as preparing students for the middle school class model. Science, social studies, and writing were co-taught by the grade-level teachers this year. This allowed for the opportunity to mix classes for group projects. Every student participated in the Invention Convention, with several students reaching the state level of competition for their creative inventions. A field trip to Boston's Freedom Trail in the fall enhanced the study of American History in Social Studies throughout the year. Teachers facilitated student-led parent conferences that allowed students to take ownership of their learning and share their progress with their adults. Many students were part of our instrumental program, while the entire 5th grade participated in our Choral program. Students also participated in the STEPS middle school transition days in the Spring as well as completing the C3 program with SPD Officer Grigerek.

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ZAYA A. OSHANA ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Josephine Rogala, Principal

Zaya A. Oshana Elementary School had a successful 2023-24 school year focusing on professional development to support improvement in academic growth and achievement while continuing to maintain safety and positive family engagement throughout the school year. Our collaborative approach to early intervention strengthened our tiered response in both reading, math, and behavior, while opportunities for teacher-led vertical learning walks contributed to a proactive and professional school climate. Our work with DBI through our partnership with UCONN strengthened our ability to analyze data while monitoring and adapting our intervention decisions to improve reading and math outcomes for all students. Along with the district literacy team and administration, teachers implemented new reading assessments, including DIBELS, and worked together to analyze data through the new platform, mClass. The Oshana PTO sponsored many family and student events including our annual Ice Cream Kick Social, Halloween Family Night, Bingo Night, Scholastic Book Fairs, Holiday Bazaar, an author's visit, and a laser light show showcasing Black History. Monthly PTO meetings and STEPS school assemblies were held highlighting developmental assets and emotional intelligence. The Oshana drama club performed Seussical Jr to sold-out audiences in all three performances while 4th and 5th students participated in Robotics Club and Math Olympiads. Our annual school-wide Art Show exhibit held in June showcased art represented by all students in kindergarten through fifth grade.

Kindergarten

Students engaged in multi-disciplinary learning throughout the school year. Examples included a field trip to Indian Rock Nature Preserve, observations of butterfly and ladybug life cycles, investigations of sinking and floating through shipbuilding in science, and pumpkin and apple curriculum theme-based learning stations. Parent engagement activities were held throughout the school year such as Friday Mystery Readers, parent-led learning stations, blanket-making for Southington Community Services, and curriculum-centered events. Teachers collaborated with the literacy specialist and tutor to restructure reading groups, which led to high academic achievement in reading by year's end.

Grade 1

Teachers engaged in ongoing professional development with the literacy coach focusing on instructional shifts based on the science of reading. First-grade students engaged in multiple hands-on investigative learning activities including observing shadows in determining shifting patterns of the sun, studying life cycles and hatched baby chicks, filling a pumpkin with trash and burying it, only to dig it up on Earth Day to see what happened. First graders also engaged in diverse books, learning about different holiday traditions, investigated how to use their shadows

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to determine the shifting pattern of the sun, created sound makers to study how vibrations create sounds, and made a field guide showing how animals adapted to changing seasons. First graders also attended a field trip with 'High Touch, High Tech' to learn about the interrelationship between sound and vibrations.

Grade 2

Second-grade students and teachers hosted the annual school food drive to help support the Southington Community Services food pantry after learning about communities in social studies. Students learned about their hometown of Southington and hosted a visit from the Barnes Museum. In addition, second graders researched animals and created posters using Poster My Wall in media skills, discovered how animals and plants depend on one another through a hands-on field trip to Camp Sloper, and planted vegetable and fruit plants in the school garden in collaboration with LEAF and Mark Ramsey. Parents were invited into classrooms throughout March as Mystery Readers and for special events during the school year. Teachers engaged in ongoing professional development with the literacy coach to implement shifts in curriculum based on the science of reading.

Grade 3

Teachers collaborated with literacy and math specialists through coaching cycles focusing on leveling up student talk and critical thinking. Third graders participated in diversity lessons led by consultants Mr. Paul Vivian and Rev. Dr. Audley Donaldson celebrating the uniqueness of each family. Students worked collaboratively to research extreme weather and then designed and built models representing ways to protect our school. Third graders also researched animals and created animal slideshows which they presented to their classmates, and observed the life cycles of butterflies. During a field trip to Indian Nature Preserve, students learned about the lives of indigenous people.

Grade 4

Fourth-grade students participated in an annual science field trip to Camp Sloper to research erosion in the fall. While learning about the American Revolution, students chose an event and then wrote and published an essay about what they learned. Teachers worked with the literacy and math coaches focusing on leveling up student talk to foster collaboration and critical thinking. Students engaged in multiple enrichment opportunities, including a project that involved starting a school store where students learned the different aspects of starting a business.

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Grade 5

Teachers engaged in ongoing collaboration with the math and literacy specialists to level up student talk in the areas of math and reading while analyzing data to create flexible groupings. Fifth graders participated in the CT Kid Governor program, which ultimately produced the second CT Kid Governor winner at Oshana School. Students were able to visit the Old Connecticut State House to take part in the 2024 CT Kid Governor Inauguration ceremony and support their classmate. Additionally, students and teachers collaborated with parents to make blankets for Southington Community Services, visited residents at The Summit during Halloween, participated in diversity workshops with Paul and Audley, researched and designed projects for the annual Invention Convention, learned about Early Colonization and the Revolutionary War during their field trip to Newport, Rhode Island, and facilitated student-led conferences for parents in the spring.

Ongoing Work/School Improvement

During the 24-25 school year, Oshana staff will focus on implementing the new language arts program with literacy coaching support in grades kindergarten through second grade while teachers in grades third through fifth will implement strategies that build critical thinking, collaboration, communication, and creativity through Thinking, Building, Classrooms in math. Improvement to MTSS systems will also be a focus while continuing to build capacity around the Vision of a Graduate and provide opportunities for students to demonstrate the six competencies across all content areas.

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SOUTH END ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Rita Sterns, Principal

Enhancements

The 2023-24 school year was successful for both students and staff at South End Elementary School. South End School continues to focus on creating a safe school climate for all students and staff. Social and emotional well-being was stressed from the start of the school year. This year our Social Worker pushed into kindergarten classrooms using the Second Step curriculum to present lessons highlighting social and emotional learning. South End celebrates Classroom Charter Champs monthly during schoolwide Town Meetings centered on Caring School Climate, Safety, Achievement, Motivation, Positive Peer Influence, Self-Esteem, and Reading for Pleasure. Each grade level this year chose an asset and presented it, with the help of our 5th-grade STEPS ambassadors.

Celebrations

The South End PTO continues to support students and teachers with their time and financial generosity. This included field trips, in-house and in the community, cultural arts opportunities, classroom books from the Scholastic Book Fair, and a captivating field day for all students. In September and October, South End participated in One Book, One School, reading the novel, *Finding Gobi*. Staff volunteered to read and record chapters so families could experience an audio option. The PTO brought the author, and his canine star of the book, Gobi, to South End for a culminating presentation. It was an incredible day for our students and staff. Continued efforts to promote cultural awareness were a focus once again this year. Paul Vivian and Audley Donaldson returned to South End to provide diversity training to third and fifth-grade students. Conversation topics included breaking stereotypes, diversity, bullying, and acceptance. Read Across America week saw South End host a schoolwide Book Swap. Students at each grade level donated their gently used books. In April, the South End Drama Club performed three sold-out performances of *The Little Mermaid*. This is the 20th drama production that South End has performed. Our SEES Polar Plunge fundraising was led by a staff raffle and raised over \$1200 to benefit Camp Sloper. A Volunteer Tea was held in May to thank the many parent/grandparent volunteers who donated their time to our students. Teachers donated breakfast items and all students decorated thank you cards. South End brought back an Open House Art Show in May that featured artwork created by each student. Also in May, our second graders presented their Patriotic Program to families, local veterans, and active military members. Students performed patriotic songs under the direction of our music teacher and created Patriotic bookmarks to share with active duty and retired military personnel.

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Kindergarten

Kindergarten teachers continued their work with district coaches in both literacy and mathematics. Literacy work was focused on phonics and the use of decodable texts. Engaging Math stations were utilized to introduce and reinforce concepts to our students. The Science of Reading continues to be the focus of classroom instruction and student performance. Kindergarten also continued exploring many Science topics this year. High Touch, High Tech, an interactive in-house science program was presented to our students.

Grade 1

First-grade teachers continued meeting with literacy specialists for professional development as the implementation of the Science of Reading was woven into daily reading lessons, small group instruction, and phonics lessons. They have continued their work with decodable text, using Jump Rope Readers. A Jump Rope Reader celebration was held in May as our first graders read to a special person. Ready Mathematics was implemented in classrooms and strengthened the differentiation of instruction. Students continued setting personal goals using *My Path* to work on strengthening previously taught skills. Math centers and push-in support from our math specialists and tutor also provided additional reinforcement. Students continued exploring the concept of research which encouraged communication and collaboration with peers. The after-school Lego Robotics Club continued to be offered to first graders and participation has doubled.

Grade 2

Units of study in Reader's and Writer's Workshop continued to be the driving force of our literacy instruction. A continued emphasis on small group instruction aimed at strengthening phonic skills was a main focus. Professional learning with district literacy coaches enhanced and strengthened our teachers' work. The Math Workshop model, math centers, and IBlock time continue to provide students with differentiated lessons and instruction. Students continued with individual skill strengthening using the i-Ready Pathway to target growth. Second graders again visited Camp Sloper to explore animal habitats and the Roaring Brook Nature Center. They again worked with the LEAF program to plant a school garden and ended their year with an 'egg drop' from an SFD ladder truck. Students designed a carrier to protect an egg from a 100-foot drop using the properties of physics.

Grade 3

Work continued in Readers and Writers workshops, with a renewed shift to small group instruction. District Literacy coaches continue to provide professional development and coaching opportunities to strengthen instructional practice. Shifts in the delivery of instruction include a focus on vocabulary utilizing Word Love. Data and assessment continue to drive instruction, particularly in math. Students use the Three Reads Strategy, diving into context, mathematical concepts, and inquiry as guides. Our students continue to set personal goals using *My Path* to reinforce individual skills. As part of their science curriculum, classes visited Roaring Brook

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Nature Preserve. Mr. Paul Vivian and Rev. Dr. Audley Donaldson continue to meet with our students to share diversity lessons.

Grade 4

Reader's Workshop topics focused on historical fiction with a focus on the American Revolution. Teachers also focused on small groups, using differentiated instruction based on diagnostic results. In the Writer's Workshop, our students wrote personal narratives, opinion essays, and informational pieces based on high-interest topics. Word Love and Patterns of Power strengthened writing skills. The Math Workshop model was again utilized as well as differentiated math centers to reinforce skills. Our math specialist was instrumental in small group instruction during IBlock as we continued to reinforce our SRBI interventions. Students visited the Connecticut Science Center and Camp Sloper to study the effects of erosion.

Grade 5

Fifth grade had a successful year which emphasized transitioning to middle school. Teachers worked on developing student independence and responsibility in multiple areas. Many students led their parent-teacher conferences and took ownership of their learning by utilizing self-assessment skills. The workshop model continued to be the format in reading and writing, though small group instruction was also a focus this year. Coaches continued to push into classrooms and support teachers' instructional practice.

i-Ready, My Pathway was used as a self-measuring tool in math and students worked at their own pace and level to strengthen skills and set goals. Our STEPS Ambassadors volunteered in kindergarten, first, and second-grade classrooms supporting students in literacy and numeracy. 5th-grade volunteers also led town meetings, working with younger grades on specific assets. All students participated in the Invention Convention with one student reaching the state level. Students also had the opportunity to participate in the CT Kid Governor program. Our fifth graders continued with the C3 program, working with Officer Fisher of the SPD.

Ongoing Work/School Improvement

South End continues to work at creating a positive school climate where all students thrive and families feel welcomed and included. Social and emotional work continues throughout our day in classrooms at each level. The Science of Reading continues to drive our literacy instruction and guides our teachers to deliver the best, research-based, instruction to our students. Our work with UCONN using DBI will continue to strengthen our SRBI-tiered intervention. The work that was done this year with UCONN will lead us in September as we restructure our SRBI processes. Data-driven instruction will guide our literacy and numeracy specialists in providing tiered instruction. Analyzing, and using data to drive instruction continues to be a priority as we work with iReady math diagnostic testing in math, and DIBELS in reading. The four C's continue to be an area of focus as teachers work for integration in all content areas.

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WILLIAM M. STRONG ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Melissa Barbuto, Principal

Enhancements

The 2023/2024 school year was another year full of amazing accomplishments at William M. Strong Elementary School! This year Strong School continued to focus on cultivating a positive school climate. In order to foster a positive school climate, which promotes the learning and well-being of the school community, the entire school implemented components of the Responsive Classroom approach, expanded the implementation of Emotional Intelligence to all students and parents, and encouraged a Growth Mindset for all students and staff through monthly whole school activities and presentations led by staff and students. Academic growth and achievement were a focus for all students as well. Intervention support and enrichment was provided in all content areas based on student needs. Due to this, students made significant academic and social/emotional growth.

Celebrations

The PTO continued to be dedicated to supporting the Strong School community through cultural arts programs, enrichment activities, after school clubs, fundraisers, and family night events. These included book fairs, a reading under the stars event, karate club, robotics club, yoga club, family movie night, Yard Goats game and an APEX fundraiser. Throughout the year, the PTO also provided staff with materials for their classrooms and recess equipment. In collaboration with the PTO, Strong School successfully participated in the "One School, One Book" program. One School, One Book provided the opportunity for all families at Strong School to experience the same book at the same time, Finding Gobi. It concluded with a visit from Gobi himself and the author of the book.

Work around Emotional Intelligence continued to expand and thrive this year with the implementation of Student Self Awareness Leaders. Student Self Awareness Leaders led the school in recognizing, labeling, and regulating their emotions daily. Each month, students voted for a Charter Champion within their classroom to recognize and celebrate someone who "lived" the Charter each day. Charter Champions were recognized monthly through whole school meetings and family newsletters. Furthermore, throughout the year, several staff meetings were designated to focus on self-care for staff to strengthen their own emotional well-being.

Continued efforts to enhance cultural awareness among students were taken. Paul Vivian and Audley Donaldson returned to Strong School to provide third and fifth graders with diversity training. Classroom libraries were expanded to include diverse text to provide students with books that are both lenses and mirrors into themselves and others.

Kindergarten through fifth grade teachers continued to incorporate key components of the Responsive Classroom Approach into their classrooms in order to build a positive community. In addition to Morning Meeting, all teachers implemented key components of Emotional Intelligence through the creation of classroom Charters, checking in on the Mood Meter, creating strategy walls and implementing conflict resolution lessons, all of which had a positive impact on student's social and emotional growth.

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All kindergarten through fifth grade teachers implemented the Ready Classroom math program in conjunction with MyPath and workshop stations in order to differentiate instruction. Along with this implementation, all teachers received coaching from the math specialist to deepen their understanding of the math curriculum and math instructional practices.

All kindergarten through second grade teachers integrated the science of reading practices into their instruction.

Staff continued to deepen their understanding and implementation of communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and creativity across all content areas to support Southington Public School's Vision of a Graduate.

Staff focused on individual student growth through the implementation of a multi-tiered system of supports and data-based individualization. Through this process, students' progress was closely monitored to ensure they were receiving the appropriate interventions and services. Adaptations to each student's individual plan were made as needed, based on an in-depth data analysis.

Ongoing Work

Teacher professional learning will expand during the 2024-2025 school year with the implementation of a new reading program for kindergarten through second grade and a focus on integrating the science of reading practices for all third through fifth grade teachers. Teacher professional learning will also expand in the area of math for all third through fifth grade teachers with the integration of Building Thinking Classroom practices.

As the school continues to work on creating a positive school climate, during the 2024-2025 school year, staff will implement the new STEPS Asset Building Classrooms Program. This program is rooted in STEPS Asset Building Classrooms and has taken shape to combine the emotional intelligence concepts that Southington Public Schools has been practicing in its classrooms. Student and parent leadership teams will be expanded upon in order to embed this approach into the community. Teachers will also continue to utilize the Responsive Classroom component "Morning Meeting" as a structure to implement Emotional Intelligence and build a positive school community.

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R. E. THALBERG ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Erin Natrass, Principal

School Accomplishments

The 2023-2024 school year at R.E. Thalberg Elementary School was filled with learning and excitement. Thalberg teachers focused on professional learning to develop strategies and best practices to align with the science of reading. Building-based professional learning centered on building oracy in the classroom, phonics and phonemic awareness skills as well as building vocabulary and comprehension skills. This work aligned with the ongoing focus of the Vision of a Graduate. Across all subject areas, an inquiry-based approach is utilized to target the 4C's (critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity).

Additionally, all teachers continued to reflect and refine their classroom-based, tiered instruction through collaboration with literacy and numeracy specialists. A team of specialists and special educators collaborated with the UCONN Neag School of Education to refine SRBI practices through Data Based Individualization: Intensive Intervention which heavily focused on adaptations to improve student outcomes.

Focusing on the whole child, Thalberg continued to prioritize social and emotional awareness for all students. Each class developed a class charter to prioritize expectations and utilized the mood meter to help students identify and regulate their emotions. The Eagles Nest space was created by counseling staff which provided a sensory-based space for students to process their emotions to be ready to learn.

A positive behavioral approach was used consistently throughout the building. Shining Eagle awards were presented for special accomplishments throughout the year. Each month, Charter Champions were celebrated at a schoolwide assembly where students were recognized for living their class charter and being positive role models within their class.

This year, a focus on cultural awareness continued with diversity workshops in grades three and five. Mr. Paul Vivian and Dr. Audley Donaldson provided students with a safe environment to examine diversity experienced in everyday interactions.

Thalberg School welcomed seniors from AmeriCorps's RSVP Reads program to the school weekly to read with primary-grade students. This community partnership provided students with valuable, individual reading practice with former educators who volunteered to support students.

Celebrations

Thalberg School proudly highlights student abilities throughout the year. All students demonstrated their artistic talents at the first annual Thalberg Art Show. A wide variety of pieces were displayed, and families were invited to visit the show during the evening. The Lunar New Year with a whole-school parade. Each grade level worked on a piece of art to celebrate and the art pieces were demonstrated during the parade. Percussion students learned music to go

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along with the celebration for the school to enjoy. Thalberg School celebrated Flag Day with a whole-school ceremony in June. Three members of the American Legion came to enjoy songs, poems, and Flag Day facts presented by each grade level. Additionally, the Veteran's demonstrated the proper flag folding technique along with an explanation of the meaning of each fold.

The Thalberg PTO provided many enhancements to Thalberg School this year. Families were invited to take part in family nights, a trunk or treat event, a book fair ice cream social, and a spring dance. Each event brought families together, creating a strong school community.

The PTO organized a fun run fundraiser which allowed for them to sponsor a performance by famous speed painter, Rob Surette. The students marveled at his talent and the school community enjoyed one of his pieces that now hangs in the cafetorium of Thalberg School. Funds raised by the PTO allowed for significant improvements to the annual field day. Students enjoyed a full day of exciting activities that encouraged teamwork and provided a great day for students to celebrate the end of the school year.

Kindergarten

Thalberg School's youngest learners benefited from a play-based structure to the kindergarten day. Students had authentic opportunities to develop social skills in a safe and comfortable environment. Teachers collaborated with literacy coaches to implement essential components of the science of reading to develop their literacy skills. Math centers remained a priority in building number sense. Differentiated activities targeted specific power standards to support growth for all students. Students had the opportunity to visit Indian Rock to tour the farm as part of the 'living things' science unit.

Grade 1

Integration of oracy and building phonics skills continued to be a focus in grade 1. Teachers collaborated with the district coach to ensure their small group instruction targeted the necessary skills using effective strategies. Hands-on practice of mathematical power standards provided students with opportunities to build foundational skills. Students visited Flaming Farm to go along with their science curriculum. Once again, Thalberg's first graders had a hands-on learning experience in observing the life cycle of chicks.

Grade 2

Small literacy groups targeted skills necessary for grade 2 students based on the Dibels assessment data. Teachers collaborated with literacy coaches and specialists to refine their practice and implement effective strategies in decoding and comprehension. Math centers were implemented to build student mastery of skills based on iReady benchmark data. MyPath was utilized with fidelity to target individual needs. Staff from the Barnes Museum visited grade 2 students for a hands-on social studies experience. Grade 2 students participated in a bus tour of Southington and a field trip to Lake Compounce to support their learning about the Southington community.

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Grade 3

Small group instruction remained a priority in grade 3 to target skills based on Dibels assessment data. Flexible grouping allowed teachers to focus on decoding skills along with vocabulary and comprehension development. A combination of whole and small group instruction targeted power standards in math to build foundational skills. Students visited the State Capitol building in Hartford for a first-hand learning experience about our government. Students began their instrumental journey learning to read music by playing the recorder, culminating with a concert for families. All grade 3 students demonstrated creativity by participating in Caine's Arcade.

Grade 4

Strong instructional strategies continued to be used in both whole and small groups to build reading comprehension skills. Teachers implemented math workshops facilitating differentiated centers to target student need based on iReady assessment data. Fourth-grade students participated in the Hartford Marathon Final Mile in the fall to build endurance. Students practiced vocal and instrumental music throughout the year culminating with concerts for families to enjoy.

Grade 5

Thalberg students culminated their elementary years with a variety of exciting experiences. All students merged their creativity with instruction on the scientific method to participate in the Invention Convention. Students engaged in hands-on learning about Colonial America on a field trip to Sturbridge Village. Students continued to build academic stamina and rise to rigorous challenges across all subjects in preparation for the transition to middle school. Fifth-grade students brought the whole school community together by celebrating the STEPS assets throughout the year.

Ongoing Work

Thalberg staff will continue to focus on implementing an updated curriculum with a focus on the integration of the science of reading. Teachers will participate in professional learning for Building Thinking Classrooms to enhance the ability of students to think critically in mathematics. During the 2024-25 school year, Thalberg staff will engage in new learning to deepen the effectiveness of intervention and the SRBI process.

Thalberg School will be collaborating with the STEPS coalition and the Emotional Intelligence Leadership Team. Staff will implement lessons that merge components of RULER with the STEPS assets.