

# VERNON PUBLIC SCHOOLS



Office of the Superintendent  
30 Park Street • P.O. Box 600  
Vernon, CT 06066-0600  
Fax (860) 870-6005

Website: [www.vernonpublicschools.org](http://www.vernonpublicschools.org)

**Joseph Macary, Ed.D.**  
*Superintendent of Schools*  
(860) 870-6000 ext. 4660

**Robert Testa**  
*Assistant Superintendent of Schools*  
(860) 870-6000 ext. 4676

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### Press Contact:

David Owens, Communications Specialist  
Desk 860-870-3574  
Cell 860-494-5973

## Vernon Schools Welcome Students on Thursday

### *Teachers, Staff, Administrators Gather to Celebrate Start of New Year*

VERNON, Connecticut – Students return to Vernon Public Schools on Thursday, but teachers and staff are all already back at work and prepping for the upcoming year.

On Monday teachers, aides, administrators and others came together at Rockville High School to celebrate the start of another school year, to honor long-time staff, welcome 30 new teachers to the district, hear from Vernon’s teacher of the year and be reminded of the crucial role they play in the lives of students.

“Create a relationship with every student,” Superintendent Dr. Joseph P. Macary told those assembled in the auditorium at Rockville High School. “They need you. They want structure. They want somebody to respect them, to listen to them.”

Teachers are the lifeblood of the Vernon Public Schools and the relationships they build with students create the conditions for students to learn and to achieve, he said. The Board of Education, administrators and committees have created a curriculum that is right for Vernon students and established a strategic plan that guides the district forward.

Parents, family and community are essential elements in helping students be successful, Dr. Macary said. But it all comes back to teachers establishing positive relationships with students, he said.

“Once you have that positive relationship, things flow, things happen very, very quickly,” Dr. Macary said.

Dr. Macary played a video recording of Rockville High School 2023 Salutatorian Isabel Cintron’s address to her classmates. She described the impact teachers had on her and how she decided she wanted to become a teacher.

“In my junior year of high school my history teacher taught me how to make an origami crane,” Cintron said.

*The Vernon Public Schools, in partnership with family and community, is committed to provide a quality education, with high expectations, in a safe environment where all students become independent learners and productive contributors to society.*

“At first, I struggled to remember all of the folds, but with his guidance I was able to successfully produce a small paper crane. It wasn’t perfect, but slowly I was able to memorize each and every fold. One crane led to another, and each day a new pile of paper cranes would find their home on his desk.”

The small seemingly inconsequential lesson had a tremendous impact on her, Cintron said.

“Education is a lot like a paper crane,” she said. “Not everyone starts out as the same standard square, and some folds are more difficult than others and require a bit more patience and trial and error. Each teacher with their influence from preschool to graduation contributes to the final product, fold by fold.”

She said that one day she hopes she is sitting at a graduation and a student thinks of her as someone who helped them grow.

“You never know what you will be given to work with, and you cannot see the final product that your investments will create, but with time and patience it will turn out to be something intricate and beautiful, like a paper crane,” she said.

Cintron folded her speech into a paper crane and presented it to the teacher, seated in the audience at graduation, who had that profound impact on her, Paul Courtois.

He choked up Monday as he told his colleagues about that moment and how the paper crane is in a display box on his desk.

“It’s going to be on my desk for the rest of my career,” he said.

Vernon Teacher of the Year Shireen Rhoades, a reading interventionist at Maple Street School, told her fellow teachers to turn to their colleagues when they need help. You are not alone, she told them. You are surrounded by colleagues who can and will help.

“There will be times this year when it feels like things are spiraling out of control,” she said. “Students are acting up. Technology is on the fritz. Your perfect lesson is falling apart. Ask for help. Teaching is really hard. You are surrounded by kind, knowledgeable people who are happy to help you.”

Board of Education Chair Anne Fischer and Mayor Dan Champagne wished the teachers a successful school year and thanked them for their devotion to the Vernon Public Schools and their students.

Teachers have a hard job, Mayor Champagne said, and it seems to be getting harder each year. But it’s an important job that has a deep impact on students and society.

“Have a great year and keep smiling,” he said.

Fischer thanked teachers for their hard work educating Vernon’s children and expressed hope they were rested and “abundantly energized” for the new year.

“Your commitment and dedication to achieving excellence and helping to mold our children does not go unnoticed,” she said. “You are overwhelmingly appreciated by not only the board of ed, but also the entire Vernon community. You are a true gift to Vernon.”

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