

## FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

The 2023-2024 school year has started exceptionally well despite the extreme heat at the beginning of the school year. Our staff was excited to see all of our students' smiling faces return from summer vacation. As we conclude our first month of school, we are pleased to inform you that all of the students are engaged and focused on their learning. Our students are demonstrating incredible perseverance in balancing their academic responsibilities with extracurricular activities.

Region 14 will be scheduling "Curriculum Nights" for our elementary schools and middle school in the month of October to inform parents about our district curricular shifts and new academic programs. Our "Curriculum Nights" will highlight the district's delivery models in English Language Arts, Math, and Science. Mitchell Elementary School, Bethlehem Elementary School, and Woodbury Middle School are following a more structured approach to literacy and inquiry-based approach to Math instruction.

Woodbury Middle School implemented a new English Language Arts program (Open ELA) that is more rigorous. We are ensuring a more robust literacy experience and a coherent math experience from kindergarten through 8th grade. Nonnewaug High School continues to expand its course offerings and offer students additional opportunities to earn college credit and participate in workforce experiences. Region 14 has instituted comprehensive K-12 common assessments that will help staff inform their instruction and help students set and achieve their individual academic goals.

Region 14 has continued to make progress in our infrastructure that will enhance the learning environment for all of our students. Construction of the new Horse Barn at Nonnewaug High School continues to make progress, the installation of new 6th grade lockers is on schedule for October, and the new Bethlehem Elementary School playground is on schedule to be installed in the late fall.

Region 14 will continue to build on the synergy that has been created at the beginning of the school year. It is a privilege to work with your child every day.

**Brian Murphy**

# FOCUS ON 14

The monthly newsletter of Region 14 Schools

**September 2023**



## KINDNESS MURAL AT MITCHELL

Mitchell Elementary School kicked off their year-long commitment to kindness with the unveiling of a new Ben's Bells mural in September.

"This is the beginning of our Year of Kindness where we will spend the year celebrating and learning about being kind to each other and to ourselves," said MES Principal Kelly Pinho. "The mural will be a reminder that every day the MES community is striving to be kind."

In April, Mitchell fourth and fifth graders created their own unique pieces using a textured imprint and then a stamped "Be Kind" on their clay tile. They also cut out additional shapes with flowered cookie cutters to add to the design. The mural was installed in late August on the brick outside of the gym door but remained under a tarp until last night. "All of the students were so excited wondering what was behind the tarp," Pinho said. "

Fifth grader Ayla Asipi said she loved how it turned out. "I think it's great for the younger kids as an inspiration," said Asipi, who made her tile in the spring. She added that fifth graders serve as role models in the school and the mural demonstrates that.

Madeline Ritter, also in fifth grade, said she was thrilled at the unveiling. "It felt good because we worked on this last year and put a lot of effort into it and it was pulled off in just the right way," Ritter said. "It's in a great spot."

MES PTO parents Susan Drakeley and Shelly Sweatt spearheaded the mural project and did a lot of the leg work to bring this to MES, Pinho said. Additionally, Social Worker Kris Cacceci signed the school up as a "Kind Campus" to benefit from all of the ideas and activities that Ben's Bells offers.

# NEW FACES AT NONNEWAUG HIGH SCHOOL



**Dr. Mykal Kuslis, Principal**

The Nonnewaug High School community welcomed Dr. Mykal Kuslis as Principal in July. Since then, he has been busy getting to know the community. "I am looking forward to working with teachers, students, and parents and being part of this great Nonnewaug community," he said.

Dr. Kuslis said he is eager to see the growth in all of Nonnewaug's students, help them achieve at high levels, and support students in everything they do – in the classroom, on the field, on the stage and in the art room, the barns, greenhouses, and the aquaculture areas of the Agriscience program. "We have great teachers, support staff, and motivated students, so I am looking forward to sharing in their accomplishments," he said.

Dr. Kuslis, who owns a local farm, said he is excited also to be a part of Nonnewaug's extremely competitive Agriscience Program and is looking forward to the annual Drive Your Tractor to School Day in the Spring.



**Lee McMillan,  
Director of Agriscience**

Nonnewaug also welcomed Lee McMillan in September as the new Director of the Agriscience Program. McMillan, a graduate of Middletown High School's agriscience program, comes to Nonnewaug from Bloomfield High School where she was most recently a Natural Resources teacher in the Agriscience Department.

"I am honored to have been chosen as the new Director of Agriscience at Nonnewaug," McMillan said. "Agriscience changed my life and opened my eyes to a whole new world of opportunities."

McMillan is excited to bring to Nonnewaug her passion for working with students and finding their pathway in agriculture. "I look forward to serving all of our students and inspiring them to be the next generation of agricultural leaders," she said.

## 2ND ANNUAL POW/MIA RECOGNITION DAY AT NHS

Nonnewaug High School junior Andrew Grivner hosted a brief ceremony at the POW/MIA Honor Chair monument near the NHS turf this month. Grivner installed the monument last year as part of his Eagle Scout project. He was joined for the 2nd annual ceremony to mark the day by Army veteran and Woodbury resident Bud Neal, other local veterans, members of the Grivner's Boy Scout Troop, NHS Principal Dr. Mykal Kuslis, and Superintendent of Schools Brian Murphy. Grivner installed the POW/MIA Honor Chair to serve as a forever reminder of American soldiers who never came home from war and remain unaccounted for.



## BERKSHIRE LEAGUE MUSICAL FESTIVAL

Nonnewaug High School musicians make their way to the Berkshire League Music Festival at Lewis Mills High School. These musicians will practice and perform with their peers from high schools in the area. The Berkshire League Music Festival is Friday October 6 at Lewis Mills. Congratulations to these fine musicians: Spencer Maletzke, Almi Morales, Giana Ruby-DaSilva, Luke Vitalis, Dean Montero, and Lila Okoski.



# WOODBURY MIDDLE SCHOOL



## 8th Grade Social Studies Looks at American Stories



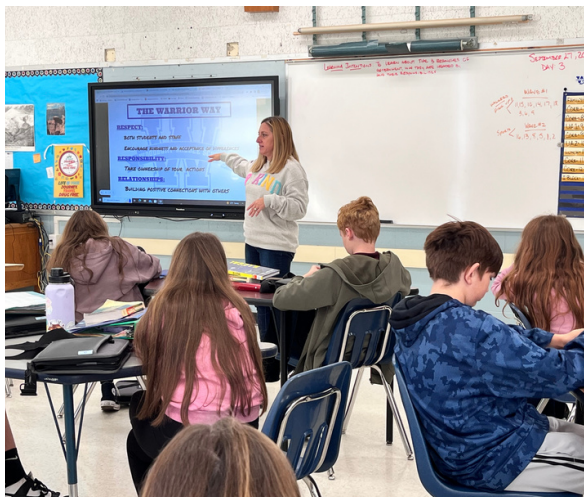
As a warm-up before eighth graders in Jim Spinner's Social Studies class jump into learning about early American history, they shared part of their own histories with classmates.

The "American Stories" lesson tasked students with uncovering their family histories to learn when and how their families came to the United States, to Connecticut, and eventually Woodbury or Bethlehem. Students were interested to hear about the many different countries from which their classmates immigrated to the United States – Albania, Slovakia, Ireland, Italy, England, Germany, Jamaica, Portugal, Mexico, and more.

They looked for patterns, themes, commonalities and just interesting stories and discovered there are similar reasons behind their families' immigrations to the area.

## World Language at WMS

In Dawn Manogue's 8th grade World Language classes, these first-year students work on vocabulary development and learn about Spanish and French cultures. Students begin with vocabulary words and work on responding to questions, learning about the contemporary life of youth in French and Spanish-speaking countries, and exploring personal and public identities of people in these countries. In Spanish, students played a Mexican Bingo style game called "Loteria" that combines vocabulary skills as they listen for the Spanish word called out and try to match the images to the corresponding picture on their card. French students have been working on greetings, words for some foods, descriptive adjectives, and learning about culture and family.



## Counselors Makes Connections at WMS

Counselors hold classroom lessons twice a week to explore many topics encompassing social-emotional skills and academic needs. Lesson topics include career inventories, looking ahead to high school, time management, decision making skills, and ultimately building their Student Success Plan over the span of the three years they are at WMS. School counselors collaborate with both students and their families and kicked off the school year with a Needs Assessment for parents, followed-up by a student survey within student classes. Parents and students had the opportunity to offer suggestions for lesson topics that will help counselors deliver a quality curriculum that aligns with the needs of both them and their families. Weekly in-class lessons strengthen the essential connections to ensure students always know where to turn for support.



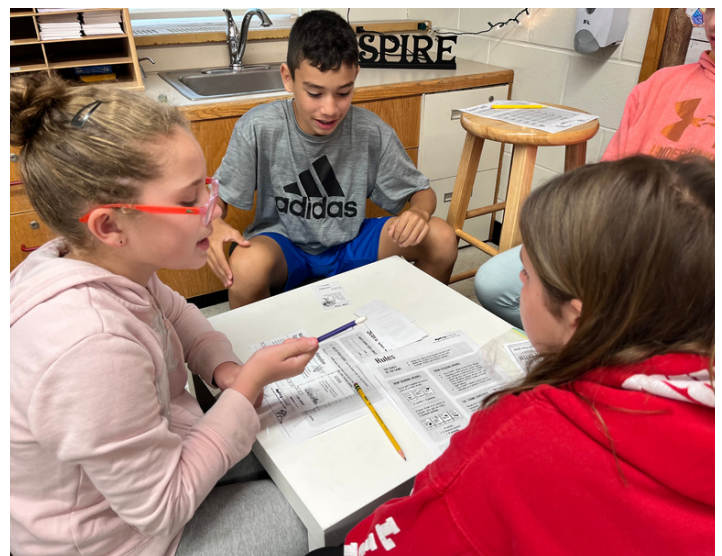
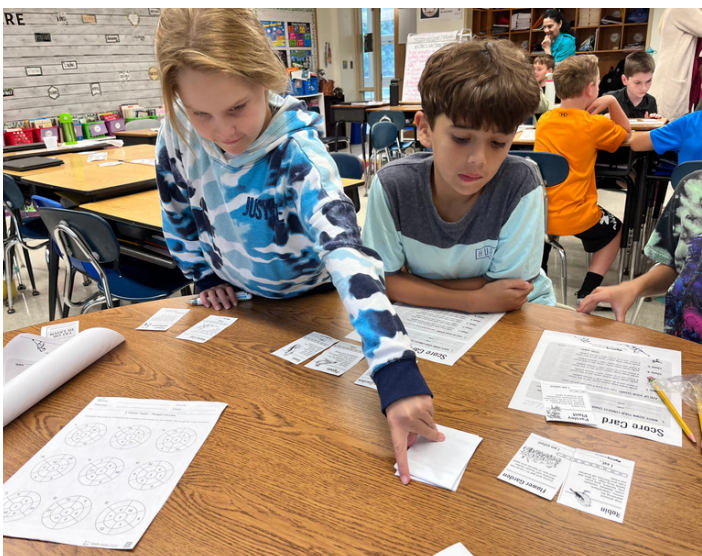
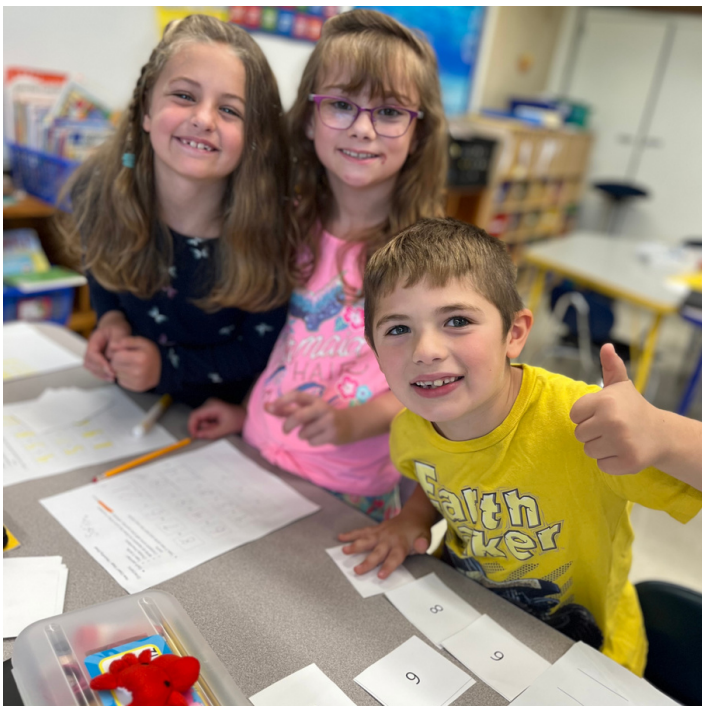


## Everyday Math & Science Means Team Work at BES

Second graders practice math facts using a fill-in-the blank puzzle to find the missing addition and subtraction equations. Students collaborate with each other in small groups and use digit cards and number cubes to practice adding and subtracting within the number 20 to make the equations true.

In science, fifth graders are learning about Food Chains. Lessons included an activity called "Eat or Be Eaten" where students worked together to create food chains based on the cards they randomly picked from the deck.

The students had fun learning about how plants, insects, animals, and humans are inter-connected within our Ecosystem.





# CURRICULUM CORNER

Dr. Taryn Fernandez, Director of Teaching & Learning



The school year is off to a fantastic start! Elementary students have been increasing their phonics skills through the implementation of Foundations while also participating in thinking critically and creatively in math and collaborating with their peers through the Illustrative Math program. Our middle school students have begun to experience the integration of reading, writing, and speaking standards with the skills of researching, analyzing, interpreting, and evaluating texts through the study of historical and scientific topics in their English Language Arts (ELA) classes. Our high school students are developing a stronger understanding of the importance of SAT testing as an indicator of future success and lifetime earnings through advisory, class meetings, and class lessons.

With the new curricular components in our elementary and middle schools, the Instructional Leaders and I will be hosting a curriculum night at each school to provide parents and guardians with information about the programs we are utilizing and even participate in a mini-lesson to experience some aspect(s) of the programs themselves.

At Bethlehem Elementary and Mitchell Elementary, we will present Foundations, the PreK-3 phonics program; Illustrative Math, the K-9 math program; and Mystery Science, the K-5 science program. At Woodbury Middle School, we will present OpenEL, the 6-8 English Language Arts program, along with the new literacy lab structure for ELA in 6th and 7th grade; Illustrative Math; and OpenSciEd, the 6-8 science program. After the three presentations, there will be a question and answer period.

We look forward to speaking with all who attend and giving a glimpse into our students' school day as parents and guardians participate in lesson components.

## REGION 14 CURRICULUM NIGHTS

### Woodbury Middle School

October 19 6 - 7 P.M.

### Mitchell Elementary School

October 24 6 - 7 P.M.

### Bethlehem Elementary School

October 26 6 - 7 P.M.

## SUMMER MAINTENANCE PROJECTS IN REGION 14



Over the summer, Region 14 undertook several facilities projects in preparation for the new school year. The parking lots and driveways at both Bethlehem and Mitchell Elementary schools were repaved. The parking lots were relined and the parking space numbers were also repainted. Also at Bethlehem Elementary School, a much anticipated playground upgrade has begun. The former playground was demolished over the summer in preparation for new playscape equipment. Additionally, brand new indoor basketball hoops will be installed later this fall. At Woodbury Middle School, new lockers in the 6th grade wing will be installed later this fall. Work at Nonnewaug High School included the removal of the island at the entrance and the start of construction for the new Agriscience Horse Barn and Riding Arena.





# ATHLETICS UPDATES



## Nonnewaug High School

The Nonnewaug Chiefs fall sports teams continue to be a force in the Berkshire League conference matches. So far into the season, our soccer, cross country, volleyball, field hockey, and golf teams are all off to winning starts to their seasons. In football, we look forward to what the co-op Northwest United Workhorses have in store. They've taken the league and state by storm and are currently undefeated. We are hopeful for a second consecutive CTC Championships win and to gain a state playoff berth.

Congratulations to our fans, students, parents, and student-athletes. The CIAC announced that Nonnewaug High School is a recipient of the Fred Balsamo Sportsmanship Award. We are proud of our NHS athletic community.

## Woodbury Middle School

Fall sports at WMS are off to a competitive start. In soccer, new WMS Math Teacher Connor Mooney took over as the Girls' team coach and so far his team of 20 players are performing well. The 20 members of the boys' soccer team under coach Adam Brutting are starting off strong. There are 35 cross country runners under the new coaching team of WMS staff Lauren Bresson and Elisa Tarantino. Field Hockey is seeing success on the field with 18 players. Lauren Ciarleglio took the helm as coach. New for this year, WMS is also offering a Volleyball Club under Coach and WMS Music Teacher Jamie Odell. The team has 24 players and although technically a club, it will have a small interscholastic schedule with games against Eli Terry and Oxford in October and a few home scrimmages.



# NAHS BRINGS ART TO THE COMMUNITIES

Members of the Nonnewaug High School chapter of the National Art Honor Society have been busy this fall bringing their love of art into the communities.

These students set up face painting booths at local annual events like the Bethlehem Fair, the Woodbury Fall Festival, the Garlic Festival, the 1st annual Kickin Country Car, Truck, and Tractor Show at Nonnewaug High School.

The National Art Honor Society supports members in their efforts to attain the highest standards in art scholarship, character, and service, and to bring art education to the attention of the school and community. Students complete at least 30 hours of community service through the society, attending at least five of the events organized throughout the year as well as assistance with set design for the NHS spring musical, the art show at the end of the year, and the Memory Project creating portraits for children around the world who have faced substantial challenges.

Look for these talented artists at more local events throughout the school year.



## WAYS TO CONNECT WITH REGION 14



[www.ctreg14.org](http://www.ctreg14.org)



Swift Reach Alerts eblast, phone  
and text message system



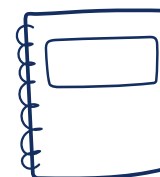
Region 14 Social Media  
Facebook & Instagram at [Region14schooldistrict](#)



Digital Backpack is updated  
weekly with new District, School,  
& community information



PowerSchool connects the middle and high school  
student and teacher communities



Weekly School Principal  
News Updates