

VERNON PUBLIC SCHOOLS



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Vernon Schools Welcome Students on Thursday *Convocation Marks Beginning of Year for Teachers, Staff*

The Vernon Public Schools begin a new school year on Thursday, and teachers, staff and administrators are already hard at work preparing for students' return.

On Monday, they came together at Rockville High School for the annual convocation to celebrate the new school year, hear praise for their successes in the classroom, honor veteran staff members, welcome 35 new teachers and be reminded of the important role they play in the lives of Vernon children.

Superintendent Dr. Joseph P. Macary urged teachers to have high expectations of their students, to give students assignments that require them to think, to always strive for success, and to be the teacher they would want their children to have.

"Create a relationship with every student," Macary said. "Kids love teachers who care about them."

The superintendent also praised teachers for their hard work, reflected in rising test scores for Vernon students. Math scores have increased dramatically since 2016, even as many districts saw scores decline during the pandemic.

"When everyone else fell, we continued to maintain our improvement and then go up," Macary said.

Scores due to be released by the state Department of Education also contain good news for the Vernon Public Schools, Macary told teachers. English and math scores continue to increase, he said.

Vernon students have also earned National Blue Ribbon School designation from the U.S. Department of Education at Skinner Road School in 2023 and Northeast School in 2020. Northeast School has also been designated a School of Distinction by the Connecticut Department of Education the past four years. Maple Street School earned that distinction this year.

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.

Board of Education Chairman Paul Grabowski thanked teachers for all of their hard work, and also acknowledged the challenges they face. He cited the problem of students using artificial intelligence to write assignments.

“These types of technologies are going to be a challenge and are not going away,” he said. “We need to figure out how to ensure our students become critical thinkers.”

Grabowski also pledged his and the board’s support to work with teachers to overcome the challenges they face.

Vernon Education Association President Peter Borofsky, a teacher at Rockville High School, told his colleagues that they are a team and that they should rely on each other.

“As we start the new school year, know you’re never alone,” he said. “We can tackle anything that comes our way, be it new teaching methods, trying to catch our students up on a daily basis, or just the ups and downs of what we do. Remember, it’s OK to ask for help, to lean on one another and to take things one step at a time.”

Vernon’s Teacher of the Year, Brian Stevenson, took the stage to loud applause. The Vernon Center Middle School reading interventionist was praised by his colleagues for his hard work bringing students to grade level in reading, and his commitment to helping his students succeed.

“Be the teacher your students want to come back and visit, the one that pushes them to be the best version of themselves, not only as a student but as a person,” he told his colleagues. “Be the one who holds them accountable for their actions, and who also picks them up off the mat and gives them another chance.”

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