

# FOCUS ON 14

The monthly newsletter of Region 14 Schools  
September 2024



## FINE ARTS ENHANCEMENTS GIVE STUDENTS MANY CHOICES



Region 14 is proud of its robust Fine Arts offerings that range from PreK art and music through to AP and ECE level art, music, theater, and media arts at the high school. Students are engaged and inspired to explore and enjoy their fine arts journeys in Region 14. The Fine Arts Department has many exciting new courses, clubs, and happenings for students in each of our schools.

New music courses at Woodbury Middle School include drumming, ukulele, and digital music. Drumming and ukulele run for 30 days each, split in the trimester schedule for sixth and seventh graders. Students can also opt for band, orchestra, and chorus, as well as after-school Jazz Ensemble, Orchestra, and Band. Jazz Ensemble is also offered to Mitchell and Bethlehem Elementary School fourth and fifth graders as an after-school club. The Tech-Ed courses at WMS have also added aerospace and advanced manufacturing lessons thanks to a partnership with Goodwin University.

At the high school level, Region 14 has partnered with Quinnipiac University and offers Video Production I & II as an Early College Experience (ECE) course where Nonnewaug High School students can earn three college credits. Students also benefit from a partnership with Fox 61 and the Quinnipiac University School of Communications and can submit their work to Fox61 for feedback from producers.

Art I and Digital Design I also include a new UCONN ECE component for students beginning in ninth grade. Throughout these programs, students refine their skills and build a portfolio that can be used for college admissions and scholarship opportunities. Nonnewaug students also have new course options for Dramatic Musical Theater, Sound Engineering, an Honors Choir option, Guitar, and Piano in their schedule this year.



## CURRICULUM NIGHTS RETURN TO THE MIDDLE & ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

Region 14 will host Curriculum Nights at the elementary schools and the middle school with presentations by Dr. Taryn Fernandez, Director of Teaching and Learning, and our Instructional Leaders at each of the schools. In all three sessions, we will discuss the math, literacy, and science benchmark assessments and inform parents how to read their students' score reports when they receive them. The Curriculum Nights are at BES on Tuesday, October 8 in the Library, at WMS on Tuesday, October 15 in the Library, and at MES on Thursday, October 17 in the Flanders Room. All sessions will begin at 6 p.m.

At the elementary schools, the presentations will focus on Illustrative Math, now in its second year of implementation in K-5; Foundations, our phonics program also in its second year of implementation in PreK through 3rd grade; Into Reading, our new literacy program aligned with the Science of Reading in grades K, 4, and 5; Mystery Science, our science program in its second year of implementation; and the new CT State Social Studies Standards that will be implemented through our social studies curriculum this year.

At the middle school, the presentation will also include Illustrative Math, which is in its 5th year of implementation in grades 6-8; EL Education, our English Language Arts program now in its second year of implementation; Literacy Lab, a second period of English Language Arts for all 6th and 7th-grade students utilizing small group instructional strategies targeted to the literacy needs of the students; OpenSciEd, our phenomena-based science curriculum, which we have expanded to ensure all NGSS standards are included at each grade level; the new CT State Social Studies Standards that have been incorporated into our social studies curriculum in grades 6-8; and an overview of PowerSchool as an important tool for parents to monitor their student's progress in their classes.

## COMMUNITY OPEN HOUSE AT NONNEWAUG HIGH SCHOOL NOVEMBER 2

Community members are invited to attend an Open House at Nonnewaug High School on Saturday, November 2 from 9 – 11 a.m.

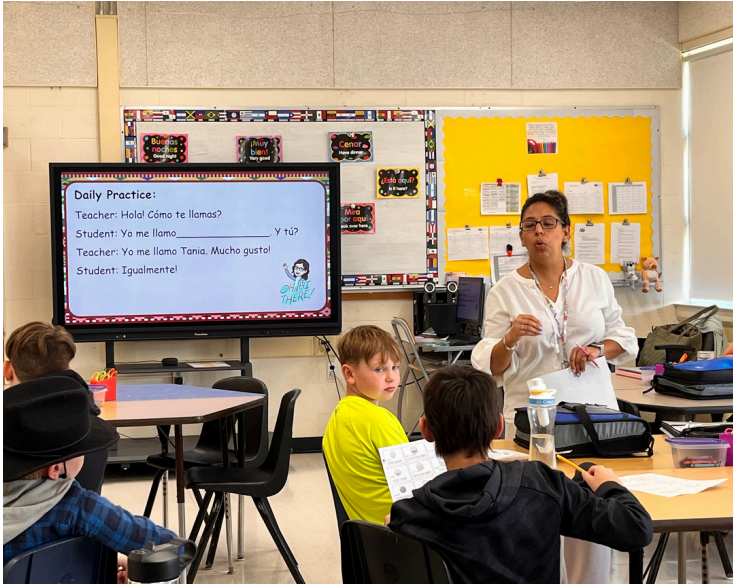
The public is invited to tour the beautifully renovated high school facility and campus including our state-of-the-art classrooms, the new athletic complex, the recently completed Horse Barn, and the Agriscience Sugar Shack/Maintenance Building.

Opening remarks will begin promptly at 9 a.m. in the auditorium, followed by guided tours leaving approximately every 10 minutes. Please join us as we celebrate this fantastic learning environment for our high school students.

Nonnewaug High School  
COMMUNITY OPEN HOUSE  
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Opening Remarks at 9:00 a.m. in the Auditorium  
Tours will leave approximately every 10 minutes from the Auditorium  
INVITATION  
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Please join us as we celebrate this fantastic learning environment for our students.  
5 MINORTOWN ROAD ~ WOODBURY, CT



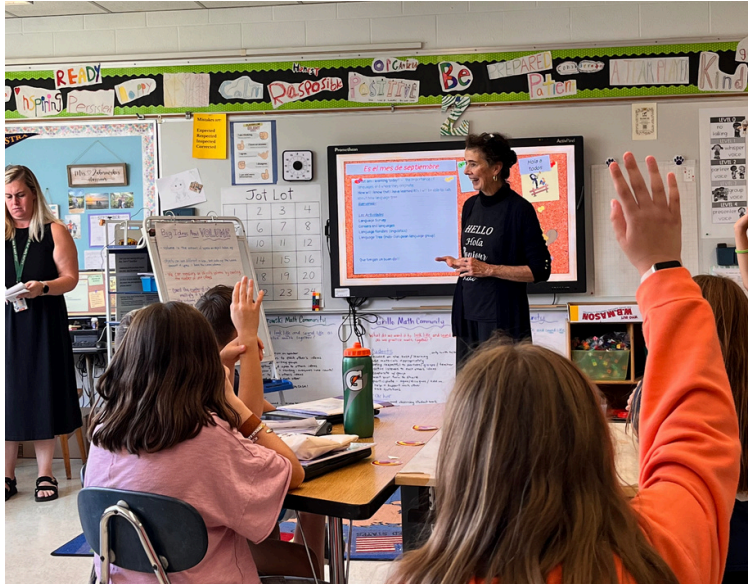
## EXPANDED SPANISH PROGRAM FOR GRADES 5, 6, AND 7



Region 14 has expanded its World Language Department with the addition of beginning Spanish offerings for fifth, sixth, and seventh graders in the district. Nonnewaug High School World Language teacher Kate Peterson is bringing her expertise and excitement about language to our fifth graders in both Bethlehem and Mitchell Elementary Schools for one class per week of instruction. At Woodbury Middle School, new teacher Tania Fernandez is working with the sixth and seventh graders for a 60-day trimester experience in Spanish as a foundation to support their Spanish 1 course in eighth grade.

Peterson, who has taught both French and Spanish at the high school and middle school levels for many years, began her fifth-grade Spanish lessons with an introduction to the importance of learning other languages and how it helps us be better communicators. Students are working on listening and hearing the different sounds and vowels, days of the week, and greetings. Peterson has even challenged her fifth-grade students to watch their favorite show with the Spanish subtitles turned on as a way to help them hear the various sounds they've been introduced to in their weekly lesson. In October, the fifth grade will move into lessons on the basics in Spanish — numbers, colors, letters, introductory conversations, and activities they enjoy.

The sixth and seventh-grade curriculum focuses on students being able to talk about themselves, their likes, their dislikes, and their interests. Fernandez will add additional topics so that students can build upon their prior year's learning and develop a foundation for moving to the next level. As a native of Ecuador, she conducts much of the class in her native Spanish. She has students communicating with her in Spanish for asks like a bathroom break or needing to get a pencil or their Chromebook from their locker. She said throughout their 60-day class, students will learn to interact in Spanish using very simple vocabulary.



Peterson and Fernandez agree that getting students excited about learning a new language is key to student success. Both teachers are committed to making their Spanish lessons equally insightful and fun and incorporate learning culture and traditions in Hispanic countries, playing games like scavenger hunts and card games and using songs and videos to pique student interest.

"You've got to love the language to learn it," Fernandez said.

Peterson added that a fifth-grade survey of the languages spoken in their families was an exciting discussion. "Learning another language is so important," Peterson said. "We talked about the importance of learning a new language through their own family experiences of relatives coming to America from another country. It's important to know what a global world we live in."





# NONNEWAUG HIGH SCHOOL NATIONAL MERIT SEMIFINALISTS

## TRACHT & VITALIS



Nonnewaug High School seniors Micah Tracht and Luke Vitalis have been named as Semifinalists in the 70th annual National Merit Scholarship Program.

They join the more than 16,000 semifinalists in the United States who scored in the top 1 percent on their PSAT in their junior year. Tracht and Vitalis are now in the pool to compete for 6,870 National Merit Scholarships worth nearly \$26 million that will be awarded in the spring.

Over 1.3 million juniors in about 21,000 high schools entered the 2025 National Merit Scholarship Program by taking the 2023 Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT®), which served as an initial screen of program entrants.

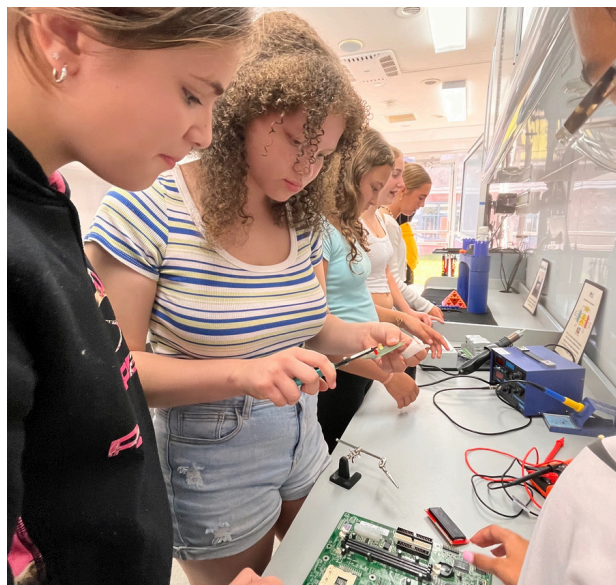
The nationwide pool of Semifinalists, representing less than one percent of U.S. high school seniors, includes the highest-scoring entrants in each state. The number of Semifinalists in a state is proportional to the state's percentage of the national total of graduating seniors.

## WOODBURY MIDDLE SCHOOL PARTNERSHIP WITH GOODWIN UNIVERSITY

Woodbury Middle School students got an up-close look at the manufacturing industry in Connecticut with a visit from Goodwin University and their mobile learning trailer in September. Every WMS student participated in a 30-minute hands-on Manufacturing In Motion presentation that included visiting the 44-foot mobile manufacturing lab and a presentation to introduce students to advanced manufacturing, engineering, STEM, and the career opportunities available.

A Goodwin University Magnet School representative gave students a brief overview of advanced manufacturing career opportunities and a brief history of manufacturing in Connecticut and the 4,000+ manufacturers here that produce a wide range of items from Pez candy to the F135 fighter jet engines of Pratt & Whitney. In the mobile lab, students had the chance to see and interact with a variety of high-tech gadgets, tools, and desktop machines including scanners, CNC machines, 3-D printing, laser engraving, as well as a focus on robotics and automation. Students were also able to test their welding skills on a welding simulator.

This was the first of 10 visits from Goodwin University to WMS under a one-year partnership that will supplement WMS Tech Ed classes with an Advanced Manufacturing element. Goodwin University educator Keith Sevigny has developed lessons that will be embedded into the Tech Ed curriculum by teacher Will Michael. "The activities expose students to themes centered around the principles and forces of aerospace," Michael said. WMS students will attend a field trip to the Goodwin campus in East Hartford in the spring.





## VOLLEYBALL MAKES DEBUT AT WOODBURY MIDDLE SCHOOL



It's been over two decades since Woodbury Middle School added a new team to the athletics roster, but this fall girls' volleyball officially became part of the WMS interscholastic line-up.

They had their first game of the season on September 23 at home in the WMS gym. Although they lost the match 2 sets to 1, Coach Jamie Odell was excited that her team held their own against an opposing school with seasoned volleyball players. The WMS team has 18 players with many who played volleyball last year when the activity was a brand new afterschool club, coached by Odell and open to all.

Odell said she was pleased that 39 girls of all skill levels came out for tryouts and says that bodes well for the new team in the future.

The team has been honing some key skills in practice, focusing on techniques like getting low to retrieve the ball, using forearms for accurate passing, and mastering setting and jumping. "Volleyball comes with a learning curve, especially for younger players who may not find these skills intuitive," Odell explained. "We're emphasizing ball control, communication, and assertiveness on the court. My goals for this inaugural season are to ensure the girls enjoy themselves while pushing their limits, setting goals, and striving for improvement every day."

Odell said she is excited for the girls and the team as they maneuver the middle school volleyball landscape. "I don't know what to expect from the teams we will play, but based on our experience last year, my players have made huge improvements. They are super excited and prideful, especially the eighth graders."

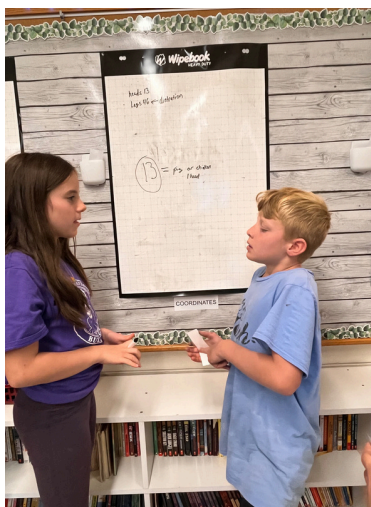
Eighth-grader Sophie Mehegan, who played last year with the WMS club team, said she thinks the team has the makings for success. "We are pretty good, so I think we have a good chance to win some games," Mehegan said.

Violet Starr, also in eighth grade, said there were no nerves about the first game against Schaghticoke, rather, the team was extremely excited to have been part of the inaugural game in the WMS gym. "We are just super excited," Starr said.

The schedule includes another game against Schaghticoke as well as games against Terryville, Oxford, Plumb Hill, and Swift.

## THINKING CLASSROOMS BLOOM AT BETHLEHEM ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Most days, you will find students working together on a whiteboard in a collaborative environment called "Thinking Classrooms." Students work in groups rather than individually and stand at the whiteboard rather than sit for this amazing and interactive learning experience. The start of the year had first-grade students learning the norms of building a Thinking Classroom and the older students utilizing what they learned last year to solve a problem.



## PLAYGROUND FOR ALL AT MITCHELL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL



The Mitchell Elementary School PTO unveiled a new playground Communication Board to make playtime for all MES students more inclusive. This is a valuable tool designed to support children's communication and social interaction during playtime. It features a range of symbols, pictures, and words that can help children express their needs, feelings, and ideas, making playtime more inclusive and enjoyable for everyone.



## AGRISCIENCE NEWS



September saw the 2nd annual recruitment event for sending school administrators and guidance counselors at the Ellis Clark Regional Agriscience Program at Nonnewaug High School. Attendees from middle schools, including Amity/Region 5, Oxford, Ansonia, Watertown, and Woodbury MS, were given tours of the Horse barn and Sugar Shack, Aqua Greenhouse, and large and small animal barns by student leaders in the FFA program, who spoke about the positive and life-changing experiences they have had as students here. Visitors also toured areas of Nonnewaug and attended breakout sessions with our school counselors to learn how traditional academic and agriscience pathways combine for the whole experience for students. They were also served a special luncheon prepared by students in the Advanced Culinary Class at Nonnewaug High School.



The Junior and Senior Equine Science class had their first hands-on classroom experience with their horses in the brand-new NHS Horse Barn/Arena this month.

The space was completed over the summer and officially opened this school year. Teacher Marisa Bedron led her students in a horse identification workshop in the new space.



For Agriscience Safety Week, Woodbury FFA chapter members held an Ag Safety event organized to educate the NHS Agriscience students on farm and agricultural safety issues.

The afternoon included safety presentations by the Woodbury Fire Marshal and members of the Woodbury Volunteer Fire Department and Woodbury Ambulance Corps. The event also included farming safety presentations from area farms.

## WAYS TO CONNECT WITH REGION 14



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



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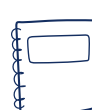
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