

FOCUS ON 14

The monthly newsletter of Region 14 Schools
November/December 2024



BETHLEHEM ELEMENTARY SCHOOL NAMED SCHOOL OF DISTINCTION IN 6 AREAS

Bethlehem Elementary School has been designated as a "School of Distinction" by the Connecticut State Department of Education for overall student performance and high academic growth for the 2023-2024 school year. This designation is based on six separate categories in which the school ranked in the top 10% of all schools in the state. The areas are high performance and high growth for all students in ELA and Math and high growth for high-needs students in ELA and Math.

In November, the CSDE released results from the 2023-2024 Next Generation Accountability System that measures individual school and district growth by gauging how well a school is preparing its students for success. According to the CSDE, the Next Generation Accountability System includes 12 indicators and moves beyond test scores and graduation rates to provide a more holistic, multifactor perspective of district and school performance and incorporates student growth over time. The Next Generation Accountability Index is based on the state's Smarter Balance Assessments given to students each spring.

"It is with immense pride that we share that Bethlehem Elementary School has been named a School of Distinction in six categories, for our academic performance and growth in both Math and ELA, for all students, including those with high needs," said BES Principal Wendy Yatsenick. "We now rank in the top 7% of all schools in Connecticut."

Last year, BES set out to offer tiered, differentiated intervention, including enrichment so that all learners would benefit and grow. "Staff also worked tirelessly to implement new curricula that supported inquiry and deeper understanding of concepts," she said. "We care deeply about the children and always want students to enjoy their school experience. In all, we feel many elements have contributed to our success."

Yatsenick is excited about the future at BES. "We continue to hone our craft, expand learning possibilities, and offer both intervention and enrichment to support each and every learner toward continued growth," she said.



FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

I would like to wish everyone a joyous holiday season. It is a wondrous time of year to reflect on the past and express gratitude for all of the good fortune in our lives.

I am extremely grateful for the magnificent students in Region 14 and the exceptional parents and staff in the district. Every stakeholder is working together to improve learning opportunities for children. I am proud that every decision is made in the best interest of our students. Our students are excelling in many areas because of this collaboration.

Region 14 continues to make significant progress on our 5-Year Strategic Plan goals and individual School Development goals. Region 14 is ranked in the top 27% of all Connecticut School Districts based on the state's Accountability Index metrics. These metrics include academic performance on state-standardized assessments, student absenteeism rates, physical fitness assessments, art access, and post-secondary readiness targets. A hearty congratulations to the students and staff at Bethlehem Elementary School on being named a "School of Distinction" for improved overall school achievement. This is the third year in a row that a school in Region 14 has received this prestigious honor. These phenomenal results are a testament to the unparalleled commitment to continuous improvement by students, parents, and staff.

As Region 14 begins the second half of the 2024-2025 school year, we will continue to build on our district curricular programs and educational opportunities for all students. We will build on these curricular programs that include a new Reading Program (Into Reading) in grades K-5, expansion of our Foreign Language offerings in grades 5-7, additional dual credit college and SAT prep courses at the high school, and Talented and Gifted programs in the middle and elementary schools.

Please take the opportunity to connect with Region 14 through our district website, digital app, and social media pages (Facebook/Instagram). In addition, the monthly newsletter highlights the exemplary initiatives that are shared via email and posted to the district website. Finally, I would like to thank the Region 14 District Publicity Specialist, Maria Duncan, who does a phenomenal job completing the monthly district newsletter. We are fortunate to have Maria as part of our district.

We are always grateful for our partnerships with parents and community members. I would also like to thank the Region 14 Board of Education for their tireless efforts in supporting the goals of the district. Their support is immeasurable. I would like to wish everyone a safe and relaxing holiday break and a fantastic new year! We can't wait to see everyone in the new year.

Warm Regards,

Brian Murphy

Superintendent of Schools



REGION 14 SCHOOLS CLOSED FOR THE HOLIDAY BREAK DECEMBER 23, 2024 - JANUARY 1, 2025



CULINARY COLLABORATION AT WOODBURY MIDDLE SCHOOL FOR LOCAL SENIOR CITIZENS



The Woodbury Middle School Culinary Department hosted its first-ever sit-down meal for local senior citizens on Thursday, November 21. Senior citizens from Bethlehem and Woodbury were invited to the Fall Harvest Luncheon in the WMS Culinary Room. The meal was prepared and served by students from both Woodbury Middle and Nonnewaug High School culinary classes. Students also welcomed Region 14 Board of Education members and administrators. Attendees enjoyed Butternut Squash Soup with Diced Apples and Creme Fraiche, Stuffed Peppers with Parmesan Crisp and Chiffonade of Basil, and a Pumpkin Rice Pudding with Maple Whipped Cream. Students from both schools worked together seamlessly in the kitchen to execute this wonderful luncheon. The culinary students from both schools teamed up last year on a soup-making endeavor at Nonnewaug to benefit local senior centers but this collaboration for a sit-down meal was the first of its kind at WMS. It was another terrific learning and mentoring opportunity for students in Mike Hadoulis' and John Dominello's culinary classes.



BACK TO THE CLASSROOM FOR THE TEACHERS DURING COLLABORATIVE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SESSION

It was a terrific day of learning and sharing at the Professional Development session in Region 14 in early November. Region 14 teachers worked together to share ideas, solve problems, grow their knowledge, and sharpen their skills in their respective content areas. Region 14 also welcomed their peers from Plymouth, Naugatuck, and Newtown School Districts for collaborations in art, health/PE and Library Media.

Health/PE and library media teachers collaborated on instructional practices. In the art room, art teachers shared best practices and worked on a unique creation as the students in their classes would.

Region 14 Music educators had their Professional Learning Day at the Connecticut Music Educators Association in East Hartford and learned and performed alongside their peers on some musical pieces.



WMS 8TH GRADE GETS CPR TRAINING IN HEALTH CLASS

Woodbury Middle School Health/PE teacher Chris McGrath secured an educational training kit for students from the American Heart Association for instruction on the lifesaving skill of hands-only CPR for 8th graders. The kits include inflatable manikins, instructional DVDs, padding for kneeling down, AED replicas, and an instructor's manual with assessments and informational material. At the end of the unit, students demonstrated the steps involved in hands-only CPR in a written assessment and received a certificate of completion. The CPR is part of the heart health unit.

McGrath used meaningful discussions and life experiences regarding heart attacks and cardiac arrest as an integral part of the class, along with the importance of leading an active and healthy lifestyle. "Heart attacks and cardiac arrest can happen to anyone, at any time," Mr. McGrath told his classes. "There are things that we can control and things we can't. One of the things we can control is how prepared we are to handle a heart-related situation if it should arise." Students also learned what to do if someone is choking and where to find the AEDs (Automated External Defibrillators) that are located throughout the school.



5TH GRADE KID GOVERNOR ACTIVITY

Region 14 fifth graders took part in the 2024 Kid Governor Election. In November, the fifth graders at Bethlehem and Mitchell Elementary School worked together to analyze the seven candidates' platforms on important community issues. The Kid Governor campaigns include school safety, healthy eating, littering, mental health, self-confidence, and endangered animals. Students watched the videos and then voted for their pick. This will help determine who will serve as Connecticut's next Kid Governor. Getting involved in civic engagement was a wonderful experience for both MES and BES students.



HORSE BARN DEDICATION CEREMONY



On November 1, members of the Region 14 and Woodbury FFA community marked the official dedication of the Elizabeth Webb Equine Center at Nonnewaug High School. The event happened during the NHS Community Open House event. Elizabeth Webb is a retired teacher who brought the equine component to the Agriscience program at Nonnewaug High School including horse science and management. She was also instrumental in getting the Equine Science program as a UConn ECE credit.

SEEN AROUND THE DISTRICT



BES Kindness Crew shares ways to celebrate acts of kindness that help improve the school community. The group is made up of fourth graders who are doing their part to ensure BES is a kind school community in every way.



Senior journalism student Brianna Johnson with her recent Best of SNO award for her profile on fellow student Noah Sapack. The story earned top honors in the sports category on Best of SNO. This was Brianna's second SNO award for excellence in journalism.



WMS 7th grade science classes welcomed Kelly Kulesza from the Air Force Reserve to help students understand how the military uses Meal Ready to Eat (MRE) kits as meals. For this unit, students will attempt to create designs for a homemade flameless heater and compare designs with classmates.

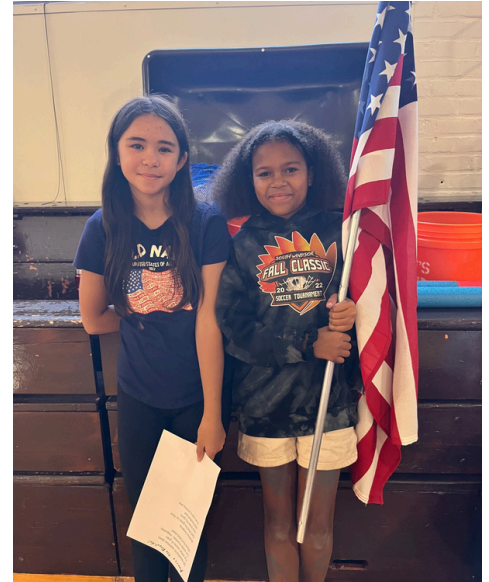


The MES Student Council members spearheaded a school-wide project to show what students are thankful for this Thanksgiving. The result is a huge "Thankful Turkey" with paper feathers of red, green, yellow, orange, and brown holding what students were most thankful for this year.

VETERANS' DAY IN REGION 14



Region 14 Schools commemorated Veterans' Day in 2024 with a variety of events for veterans from our communities of Bethlehem and Woodbury. Some of the ways our local service men and women were honored included school-wide tributes, choral and instrumental musical pieces, letters to veterans and current members of the service, classroom lessons on the origin of the day, the annual placing of American flags at all school campuses, a White Table ceremony, and a flag-raising tribute. Region 14 is grateful that our veterans could join us this year.



STEM THANKSGIVING PARADES SPARK CREATIVITY

The floats ranged in size from the smallest pulled turkey to a huge cornucopia display at the 3rd annual STEM Thanksgiving Float Parades at Bethlehem and Mitchell Elementary School. There were 135 students at both schools who opted to participate and went all out for this annual STEM project. They were creative in how their float was propelled -- pushed, pulled, remote control, carried, or even worn! Thanks to Christina Strell, Elementary Science and Social Studies Instructional Leader for making this fun event possible.



CONTINUING THE HOLIDAY TRADITIONS IN THE COMMUNITY



Long-favored holiday season traditions in our community are terrific showcases of our student and staff talents. Along with winter concerts at all the schools, the Region 14 music department is also well-represented at Tree Lightings in both Bethlehem and Woodbury every December. This year, again, members of the chorus and bands at our schools entertained the attendees with the sounds of the season.

Also during the holiday season, our NHS culinary department hosts a drive-through meal pick-up for our senior citizens. This year, students gave out a record 158 meals and flower arrangements made by the Floriculture class to senior citizens from Bethlehem and Woodbury. NHS musicians performed for them in front of the Agriscience Building. The meal this year was prepared by the students using produce grown at NHS as well as locally sourced ingredients from Roden & Logue Farm and March Farm.



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www.ctreg14.org



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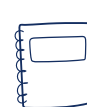
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