

FOCUS ON 14

The monthly newsletter of Region 14 Schools
June 2025



From the Superintendent

I would like to take a moment to reflect on the 2024-2025 school year. This past year has been successful on so many levels. It has been inspiring to observe all of the growth in our students over the past year. They have been committed to their learning. Students have performed remarkably well on various assessments and have displayed an ability to persevere during challenging times. I will always remember the compassion that each student showed to their peers throughout the course of the school year.

I am extremely proud of the staff for their compassion that was exhibited during this past year. The staff fostered a learning environment that was inclusive of all learners. Our entire staff is committed to continuous improvement and supporting the vision of Region 14. Region 14 5-Year Strategic Plan. Region 14 added several new exciting initiatives over the past school year: A new K-5 Reading Program (Into Reading), the second year of a middle school English Language Arts program (Open EL), a new grade 5th, 6th, 7th Spanish Program, an Advanced Manufacturing Program and Girls' Volleyball Team at Woodbury Middle School, and a Talented and Gifted Program at the middle and elementary schools. Finally, new dual credit college courses and several other courses were added to Nonnewaug High School, which have improved our academic course catalog.

As we conclude the 2024-2025 school year, I am uplifted by all of the academic progress that was demonstrated over the past school year. Bethlehem Elementary School was identified as one of the top elementary schools in Connecticut by being named a School of Distinction based on exemplary student achievement scores. Mitchell Elementary School's 5th-grade standardized (NGSS) Science scores were the best in the history of the school, and Woodbury Middle School's standardized (Smarter Balanced Assessment) English Language Arts and 5th-grade Science scores (NGSS) were the best in the history of the school. Nonnewaug High School improved its English SAT scores by over 13%, and the standardized Science (NGSS) scores were the best in the history of the school. In addition, elementary school students were recognized for their scientific talents and earned Invention Convention state accolades. Finally, Nonnewaug High School won the prestigious Ted Alex Athletic/Sportsmanship Excellence Award again from the Berkshire League. This award is a testament to how our student athletes represent Nonnewaug High School and Region 14.

Region 14 completed several major capital projects during the course of the last school year. The Nonnewaug High School Renovation Project was completed successfully, and this project culminated with a community Open House that celebrated this beautifully renovated school. The high school Horse Barn was built, and this wonderful learning space is being utilized by students and staff. Woodbury Middle School completed its parking lot paving project, several bathroom renovations, and 7th and 8th grade locker installation.

It has been a truly spectacular school year. We are grateful for all of your support as we continue to strive for excellence in every one of our schools. We are thankful for allowing Region 14 to educate your child. We value our partnership with you. We are excited for the beginning of the 2025-2026 school year (August 27) I hope you have a restful summer with family and friends.

Sincerely,

Brian Murphy

The Region 14 2025-2026 budget was approved at the 3rd Budget Referendum on June 10, 2025. Region 14 is extremely appreciative of your support as we continue to strive for excellence for our students.

MANES & PONYTAILS



Nonnewaug High School Agriscience students Selena Airgo-Bevilacqua, Isabella Geloso, and Emma Lautenschlager, participated in the 5th annual Manes & Ponytails event. Watertown's Roots and Rouge Salon. Owner Courtney Purcell and stylist Ben Modeen were on hand at the Elizabeth Webb Equine Center at NHS to cut almost 30 inches of the students' hair for the event. The hair will be donated to Wigs 4 Kids, which provides free wigs to children and young adults experiencing hair loss due to cancer, alopecia, burns, and other disorders. Manes and Ponytails started in 2020. To date, students and staff have donated almost 300 inches of hair. Equine Science teacher Marisa Bedron began this event in 2020.



ANNUAL DRIVE YOUR TRACTOR TO SCHOOL DAY



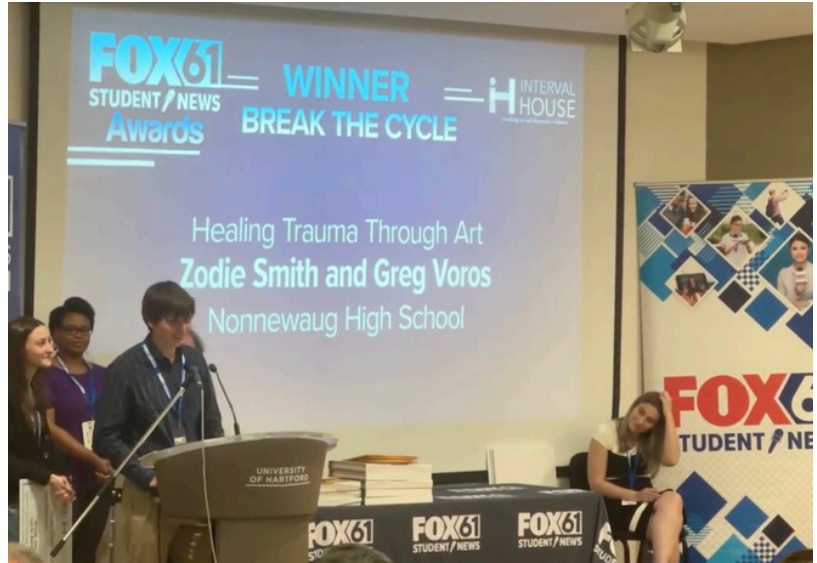
This has been a beloved tradition at Nonnewaug High School for three decades!

2ND GRADE FARM FIELD DAYS AT NHS AGRISCIENCE



Second-graders visited the Ellis Clark Agriscience Center at Nonnewaug High School today. Second graders from Bethlehem and Mitchell Elementary Schools learned about the many parts of the program from the students themselves. They visited the aquaculture area and saw the fish, met the animals in the large animal barn, sat on the tractors, met the horses in the Elizabeth Webb Equine Center, and more. This year, second graders from Ansonia Public Schools also visited. Thank you to the high school agriscience students for being such wonderful hosts!

NHS MEDIA ARTS IN THE SPOTLIGHT



Congratulations to Nonnewaug High School seniors Zodie Smith and Greg Voros on their Fox 61 Student News Award. Their video "Healing Trauma Through Art" won the Fox 61 Breaking the Cycle Award. Zodie and Greg received a check for \$1,000 at the ceremony, which aired live on June 3 in the Wilde Auditorium at the University of Hartford. Congratulations to Zodie and Greg and to Media Arts teacher Katie Blake on this terrific honor!

MES CELEBRATES WITH WOODBURY SENIOR PEN PALS



Over the last several months, Mitchell Elementary School fifth graders in Lindsay Zaborowski's class have been exchanging letters with some of the senior citizens at the Woodbury Senior Community Center. Recently, the class traveled over to the Senior Center to meet and have lunch with their pen pals! It was a great day for students to engage with their new friends and for the seniors to get to know their letter writers!

BES FAMILY FESTIVAL BRINGS COMMUNITY TOGETHER

The Bethlehem Elementary School Family Festival at the end of May was an amazing time! The PTO-sponsored event was a terrific success with the BES celebrity Dunk Tank, games, inflatables, food trucks, music, hugs from BES mascot Buddy the Bulldog, and more. Thank you to the many local organizations who participated in the festivities, as well as Nonnewaug High School National Art Honor Society members for face-painting, and the Woodbury FFA, who brought some of their animals to show. Well done to the Bethlehem Elementary School PTO for this great community event.



WMS CAPSTONE EXPO FEST

Woodbury Middle School Capstone students participated in the annual Capstone Expo Fest, where they showcased their Personal Interest Projects (PIP) in the gym. Students spent the last two trimesters developing their projects for this Expo-style presentation event to parents and a panel of judges that included Region 14 faculty, Board of Education members, and a representative from Skills 21 at EdAdvance. Projects ranged from learning a new skill, developing a hobby, helping a non-profit or a national cause, finding a way to market a skill, teaching a sport to younger peers, creating a cookbook, learning CPR, and more. The PIP allows students to follow their passions and complete a project where they can "learn, solve, make, or do" and master skills that will help them in the future.



TEACHING & LEARNING CORNER

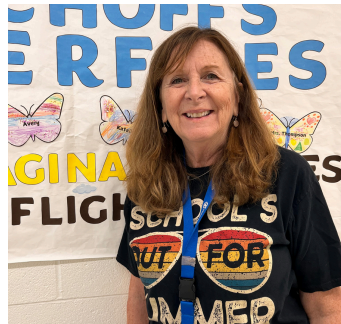
What a wonderful year of teaching and learning in Region 14!

As we enter the summer months, we hope that all of our students have the opportunity to continue their learning journeys through fun activities as they enjoy the next nine weeks of summer vacation outdoors and away from the structure of school. We also want to provide students with the opportunity to engage in structured review and learning opportunities to help ensure that they continue to develop and refine the important academic skills that they gained during the school year. The Summer Learning Page of our district website contains links to carefully selected resources and activities that will help support our students over the summer. On Thursday, June 12th, the families of returning students received a letter outlining summer learning expectations. The link in the original letter has been updated to reflect a new, accessible page on our district website.

We hope that the Region 14 community has a spectacular summer and we look forward to seeing our students again on August 27th!

Dr. Taryn Fernandez
Director of Teaching & Learning

HAPPY RETIREMENTS TO OUR REGION 14 TEACHERS



Happy Retirement to Mary Ellen Kuzma and Kathleen Bischoff at Mitchell Elementary School and Laurenn Bertoglio and William Pease at Nonnewaug High School!

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