

SEPTEMBER 2026

FOCUS ON 14

The Monthly Newsletter of Region 14 Schools

Region 14 Schools 5 Minortown Road Woodbury, CT 06798 (203) 263-4330



www.ctreg14.org

WELCOME BACK TO SCHOOL!

From the annual Nonnewaug High School Senior Sunrise celebration on the turf to the last kindergarteners stepping off the bus, the first day of school in Region 14 was just a terrific success.

Region 14 officially opened its doors on August 26, welcoming 1,500 students to classrooms for the first day of the 2026-2027 school year.

Administrators, teachers, and staff gathered in the morning to greet families, direct school buses, and kick off a new year focused on academic excellence, student well-being, and community engagement. Students and staff were excited to see each other, and smiles, hugs, flowers, and even some pretty cool shades were a big part of the day.

Staff was there to welcome kindergarten students getting off the buses and meeting their new teachers, as well as the returning students in all schools as they navigated their halls and reconnected with teachers and classmates.

"The start of each school year invites the opportunity for new learning, new friendships, and new experiences," said Superintendent Brian Murphy. "We are filled with optimism and are excited to start the new school year and continue to build on the success of several innovative curricular initiatives."

Some of the initiatives include the elementary schools' literacy and math programs, the extremely successful Advanced Manufacturing program in the middle school, a Talented and Gifted program in the elementary and middle schools, a new elementary Foreign Language program, a new high school Computer Aided Drafting course that will supplement the middle school Advanced Manufacturing program, and an additional Kindergarten and Pre-K 3 class at Mitchell Elementary School due to increased enrollment.

Region 14 is grateful to our communities in Woodbury and Bethlehem, and to All Star Transportation, for ensuring a smooth and safe morning arrival.

[Watch Mr. Murphy's interview with WFSB on our first day of school!](#)



CURRICULUM UPDATE

DR. TARYN FERNANDEZ

Join Dr. Taryn Fernandez and our Instructional Leaders at the Fall Curriculum Nights. Instructional Leaders will share information about the English Language Arts, Math, and Science curricula, as well as our in-district assessments and how to read the parent reports that will be sent home after each assessment period. Most importantly, you will have the opportunity to experience the instructional strategies and tasks that your students experience daily. Our Math Instructional Leaders will introduce you to a Building Thinking Classrooms task, and our Literacy Instructional Leaders will engage you in some literacy tasks. We know that teaching and learning have changed since many of us were in school, and we look forward to sharing just a few of our research-based instructional practices with you. There will be time allotted for a question-and-answer session and informational packets that you may take home with you. Check your email for a message from Dr. Fernandez with a Google Form link to RSVP.



FALL CURRICULUM NIGHTS



October 6 at WMS 6 p.m.
October 13 at BES 6 p.m.
October 14 at MES 6 p.m.

WELCOME NEW STAFF

Region 14 is excited to acknowledge several staff members who have joined us since the start of the 2025-2026 school year, and welcome new staff members joining us at the start of the 2026-2027 school year

Bethlehem Elementary School

Rachel Jalbert - School Counselor
Riley Martin Villalta - General Music, Instrument & Choir
Katie Stansfield - Long-Term Substitute 5th Grade
Yackira Rodolis - Spanish

Mitchell Elementary School

Ashley Cipriano - Interventionist
Haley Fabian - Kindergarten
Morgan Kales - Cafe Aide
Riley Martin Villalta - Choir
Katherine Roberts - Music and Instrument
Yackira Rodolis - Spanish
Melissa Winfield - Integrated PreK-3

Woodbury Middle School

Emily Balnis - Nurse
Ronald DeMarino - 6th Grade Math
Derek Melanson - Special Education
Myranda Panagrosso - 7th Grade ELA
Elvina Rugovac - 6th Grade Math
Sarah Wanat - Administrative Assistant

Nonnewaug High School

Rudy Bardhollari - Special Education
Julia Blanchard - Speech-Language Pathologist
Aiden Colby - Paraprofessional
Rebecca Kuslis - Library Media Center Assistant
Jennifer Lynch - Admin Assistant -Agriscience Department
Cody Madden - Special Education
Isabelle Sarandrea - Agriscience Teacher
Jolie Scott - Paraprofessional
Joanna Turner - Long-Term Sub Agriscience Teacher
Jacqui Schmitt - SCOPE Social Worker

Central Office

Megan Nicolari - Accountant
Tacy Nettleton - Human Resources Coordinator
John Ciccio - Information Technology

Transition Program

Heather Carter - Paraprofessional

► REGION 14 MUSIC PROGRAM

Region 14 welcomed students in 3rd through 8th grade and their families at two Instrumental Music Family Nights this month. Students had a great time exploring all of their instrument choices in band and orchestra, trying new instruments, meeting our Region 14 music teachers, and finding an instrument that they were excited about learning. We were thrilled to have our music faculty together and to allow families to see the progression of our program from elementary school through Woodbury Middle School and Nonnewaug High School.

It was a great way to kick off the year and get our students excited about making music!

We are thrilled that our current music enrollment for the 2026-2027 school year is approximately 135 elementary instrumental music students. That number is still growing, as we continue to have families signing up, including returning fourth- and fifth-grade musicians. If you have any questions, please reach out to Jamie Odell, the Director of Fine Arts, or our music teachers: Nicholas Ciasullo at NHS, Adam Snyder and Jamie Odell at WMS, Riley Martin-Villalta at BES, and Katherine Roberts at MES.



► LITERACY AT WOODBURY M.S.

As part of a new school-wide literacy initiative, on the first Friday of each month, WMS Family groups read the first chapter of a new book selected by WMS Library Media Specialist Aimee Shuhart. Students take notes, write down their thoughts, and if their interest is piqued, they're invited to check out the book or e-book from the library. Two students were excited to be the first ones to check out the book, 'Insignificant Events in the Life of a Cactus' to kick-off the program.



► AGRISCIENCE OPEN HOUSE

Nonnewaug High School welcomed guests from the area sending districts as well as several dignitaries to learn about the Ellis Clark Agriscience Program on September 9.

Representatives from area sending districts, including Amity, Naugatuck, and Oxford, along with local and state government officials and other guests, joined Region 14 administrators, Agriscience students, and staff for an information session and facility tour to see the many areas of the program firsthand.

Student leaders in the FFA program spoke about the positive and life-changing experiences they have had as students here. Student-led tours included the Horse barn and Sugar Shack, Aqua Greenhouse, and large and small animal barns. Visiting guidance counselors also attended breakout sessions with our school counselors to learn how traditional academic and agriscience pathways combine for the comprehensive experience for students.

To top off the day, guests enjoyed an amazing luncheon of soup, vegetable lasagna, and pumpkin tiramisu trifle prepared and served by the students in the NHS Farm to Table class. The FTT class is being offered again this year as part of both the Agriscience and Culinary curriculum.

SAVE THE DATE! The fall 8th grade Agriscience Open House is scheduled for October 15 from 5:30 - 8 p.m. We invite our 8th-grade students and families to learn about the program.



ATHLETICS UPDATES

The community is invited to support our high school and middle school student-athletes at any home or away athletic contest.

Please be advised that all home night games for Nonnewaug High School fall athletics - football, volleyball, soccer, and field hockey - require digital tickets via GoFan. Middle school games are free.

Single-game tickets are \$7 for adults and \$4 for students and seniors. Cash is not accepted at the gate; you must purchase tickets in advance on GoFan or pay by card/digital payment at the gate.

Visit the [Go Fan Link](#) or use the QR code.



[NHS Athletics Schedules](#)



[WMS Athletics Schedules](#)

FALL SPORTS TICKETS



DIGITAL TICKETS REQUIRED AT ALL NIGHT GAMES THIS YEAR

REGULAR-SEASON PRICES
\$7 ADULT | \$4 STUDENT/SENIOR

SEASON TICKET PACKAGES
AVAILABLE FOR ALL FALL SPORTS

NO CASH ACCEPTED
PRE-SALE OR CARD/PHONE AT GATE

NEW ALL-YEAR STUDENT PASSES
ON SALE FOR NHS STUDENTS (\$20)

BUY ONLINE TO SKIP THE LINE!



ELEMENTARY SPOTLIGHT

Our new Kindergarten students at Bethlehem Elementary School had a terrific time meeting Literacy Instructional Leader Caitlin Jurkowski during the first few days of school. Mrs. Jurkowski shared her love of reading with students in Mrs. Prescott's class by reading from one of her favorite books. We look forward to watching our Kindergarten students blossom into confident readers and writers in their literacy journey!



Mitchell Elementary School 4th graders jumped right into learning with a Building Thinking Classroom activity with Math Instructional Leader Alicia Schiavo. One exercise had fourth-grade students solve a deep-sea exploration problem using a variety of strategies. Students discussed labeling their work and how this helps others to understand their thinking. One group even used an infinity symbol and explained what it means to the rest of the students.

▶ REGION 14 2026-2027 CALENDAR

Need an updated calendar? CLICK on the calendar image below to download the current Region 14 District Calendar. Visit the website – <https://www.ctreg14.org/district/r14-calendar> for all school, district, and Board of Education events.

2026/2027 REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT 14 CALENDAR

July 2026						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

August 2026						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31				(6)	(4)

September 2026						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30			(21) (21)

October 2026						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31
					(21)	(20)

November 2026						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30				(18)	(17)

December 2026						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		(17) (17)

January 2027						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31					(19)	(19)

February 2027						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28						(18) (18)

March 2027						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			(22) (21)

April 2027						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	
					(17)	(17)

May 2027						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31				(20)	(20)

June 2027						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30			(7) (7)

- Professional Learning/Early Dismissal First and Third Wednesdays Unless Otherwise Noted: NHS/WMS 1:00 pm; MES/BES 2:00 pm
- Early Dismissal Times: NHS and WMS 11:55 am; MES and BES 12:55 pm
- School Year includes 181 student days and 186 faculty days
- The Last day of school and high school finals schedule is dependent upon cancellations due to weather or other emergencies

Date	Event/Holiday
July 6 – 30 18-Th 16 days	Extended Year Services
August 19 & 20	New Teacher Orientation
August 24	Convocation/Teacher Prof. Develop.
August 25	Teacher Professional Development
August 26	First day of School
September 7	Labor Day – Schools Not In Session
September 10	NHS Open House
September 22	BES/MES Open House
September 24	WMS Open House
October 9	Teachers' Professional Learning Day - Schools Not In Session
October 12	Columbus Day – Schools Not In Session
October 15	NHS 8 th Grade Agriscience Open House
November 3	Teachers' Professional Learning Day - Schools Not In Session
November 11	Veteran's Day Observed – Schools Not In Session
November 17, 19, 20	Planned Early Dismissal for BES/MES (Parent/Teacher Conferences)
November 25	Early Dismissal
November 26 & 27	Thanksgiving – Schools Not In Session
December 7, 8, 10	Planned Early Dismissal for WMS (Parent/Teacher Conferences)
December 23	Early Dismissal
December 24 to January 1	Winter Break – Schools Not In Session
January 14	Planned Early Dismissal for NHS (Parent/Teacher Conferences)
January 15	Early Dismissal – Teacher Prof Lrng
January 18	Martin Luther King, Jr. Day – Schools Closed
February 15 & 16	Presidents' Day/February Break – Schools Not In Session
March 8, 10	Planned Early Dismissal for WMS (Parent/Teacher Conferences)
March 9, 11, 12	Planned Early Dismissal for BES/MES (Parent/Teacher Conferences)
March 19	Teachers' Professional Learning Day - Schools Not In Session
March 24	Planned Early Dismissal for NHS (Parent/Teacher Conferences)
March 26	Good Friday/Schools Not in Session
April 12-16	April Break – Schools Not In Session
May 28	Early Dismissal – Teacher Prof Lrng
May 31	Memorial Day – Schools Not In Session
June 9	Last Day of School* EARLY DISMISSAL
Professional Learning/Early Dismissal Wednesdays	1 st and 3 rd Wednesdays Unless Otherwise Noted NHS/WMS 1:00 p.m. - MES/BES 2:00 p.m.

Revised/Board Approved 09/14/2026