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FOCUS ON 14

The Monthly Newsletter of Region 14 Schools

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CELEBRATING STUDENT ACHIEVEMENTS AND DISTRICT PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENTS

Region 14 Schools is proud to announce significant academic progress and districtwide achievements as revealed in the 2025-2026 state Department of Education Accountability Index data.

Region 14 has advanced to the top 15% of Connecticut school districts, reflecting an improvement in overall district performance as compared to last year's ranking in the top 24%. The district's Accountability Index reached 82.3% for the 2025–2026 school year, more than 10% higher than the state average of 72.2% in the 200 school districts measured.

"I am extremely proud of the extraordinary work of our students, staff, and supportive parents that made Region 14 one of the best school districts in the state based on the 25-26 accountability results," said Superintendent Brian Murphy. "Our staff have done a magnificent job focusing on meeting the needs of all students in the district, resulting in improvement across all schools and a School of Distinction designation for Bethlehem Elementary for the third consecutive year."

Individual schools are demonstrating notable progress:

Nonnewaug High School is now ranked in the top 9% of all schools statewide, and 11% of all Connecticut high schools, improving from the top 25% of high schools ranking last year.

Nonnewaug High School improved by over 6% on the accountability index, increasing by almost 12% for the SAT Math proficiency, and improved 19% in the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS).

Bethlehem Elementary School earned Connecticut School of Distinction recognition for the third consecutive year, based on high growth in mathematics among all students and high-needs students. BES ranks in the top 10% statewide in these areas.

Mitchell Elementary School earned a rank in the top 4% of all schools for Average Growth Target Achieved in Mathematics and moved to the top 16% of elementary schools, jumping 10% statewide from last year's 26%.

Woodbury Middle School continues its upward trajectory. WMS achieved the highest mathematics proficiency in its history, with its sixth-grade cohort exceeding its fifth-grade proficiency for the first time. Woodbury Middle School continues to improve with a .5% increase in the Accountability Index.

Beyond academic performance, Region 14 is seeing encouraging progress in student wellness and engagement. Student success on the Connecticut Physical Fitness Assessment increased 14% across the district. Additionally, all district-level performance indices in English Language Arts, mathematics, and science improved for both all students and high-needs students.

The district is also making strides in addressing chronic absenteeism. The rate decreased by 0.5% from the previous year and has declined by 5 % over the past three years.

The results demonstrate continued growth across the district and highlight the commitment of students, educators, administrators, and communities in the Region 14 School District. These achievements reflect the district's ongoing commitment to continuous improvement and its focus on providing meaningful learning opportunities and strong outcomes for every student.

"As Region 14 moves forward with its Five-Year Strategic Plan for 2026–2031, the district will build on these accomplishments, using student performance data and ongoing evaluation to guide priorities and strengthen educational opportunities across the district," Murphy said.







HAPPY BIRTHDAY BETHLEHEM ELEMENTARY SCHOOL!

Bethlehem Elementary School celebrated its 100th anniversary on October 20 with a celebratory program honoring a century of educational excellence, school spirit, and community tradition.

The celebration began with a grade-level Parade of the Decades, in which students brought the school's history to life by representing fashion from the 1920s through the 2000s. The parade featured everything from flapper-inspired attire of the 1920s and poodle skirts and letter jackets of the 1950s to the tie-dye and bell-bottom styles of the 1960s and 1970s, neon fashions of the 1980s, grunge looks of the 1990s, and styles of the 2000s.

Representatives from the Old Bethlem Historical Society brought a display of historical artifacts and photographs, offering students and guests a glimpse into the school's rich history and its longstanding role in the community.

Distinguished guests included local and state officials, including Bethlehem First Selectman Ray Butkus, Selectman George Rehkamp, Senator Eric Berthel, Senator Steve Harding, and Representative Karen Reddington-Hughes, former BES staff members and teachers, Region 14 administrators, and Board of Education representatives.

Remarks from several distinguished guests highlighted the significance of the milestone and celebrated the school's lasting impact on generations of students.

Speakers included Selectman Butkus, a former BES student; Sen. Berthel; Rep. Reddington-Hughes, a Region 14 Board of Education member; former principal Alice Jones; and Dr. Taryn Fernandez, Region 14 Director of Teaching and Learning.

Each reflected on the school's history, recognized the people who have shaped its legacy, and encouraged students to look forward to the opportunities and possibilities that lie ahead.

A highlight of the celebration was the presentation of an official legislative citation to BES Principal Lisa Bing by Rep. Reddington-Hughes, Sen. Berthel, and Sen. Harding. The citation recognized the dedication and contributions of Bethlehem Elementary School's faculty and staff, past and present, as well as its alumni, whose collective efforts have helped make the school's 100-year legacy possible.



K-8 SCHOOL DAY CHROMEBOOK USAGE IN REGION 14

DR.TARYN FERNANDEZ

The purposeful and meaningful use of technology, especially at the elementary level, is a prominent discussion topic in education. As such, I would like to share the district's current expectations for individual student use of Chromebooks during the school day as well as the work we are doing to further reduce student usage at the elementary level. I would first like to stress that Region 14 has no intention of increasing Chromebook usage in any way and that our students are learning foundational skills and building their content knowledge with their teachers, not from computer programs. All K-8 students are interacting primarily with print materials and workbooks for literacy and math, and they are practicing writing and doing math on paper or on non-technology-based surfaces, such as whiteboards and magnetic boards as lessons permit.

Our daily elementary schedule leaves minimal time outside intervention blocks for individual screen time. Beyond dedicated instruction in reading, math, and science, students' days are filled with specials, lunch and recess, and morning meetings, along with purposeful play for kindergarten and first grade. During our scheduled intervention block (time designed to deliver targeted support for some students and extension for others) students in need of literacy or math support are placed in small groups with their grade-level teachers, interventionists, or instructional leaders. Students performing at or above grade level engage in either screen-free enrichment such as independent reading, math flash cards, and tabletop centers, or screen-based enrichment such as Mystery Science extensions, read-alouds, or targeted digital practice via IXL skill plans. Throughout the school year, students who are not in need of math or literacy support will also cycle into enrichment opportunities with some of our specials teachers. Our intervention blocks and the resources utilized during these blocks are integral components to the growth in student performance over the past few years.

The chart linked here is informed by discussions with our instructional leaders and administrators in grades K-8, indicating the approximate time a student may spend on the Chromebook for individual practice or review as well as during teacher-led activities or testing. The daily elementary approximations are based on days when a student does not participate in any small group instruction with an adult and engages in screen-based enrichment for the full intervention block. The middle school approximations are representative of the day-to-day use, but may increase when students are working on research projects or typing final drafts of essays. In all of our schools, we regularly review our practices and resources to ensure their effectiveness.

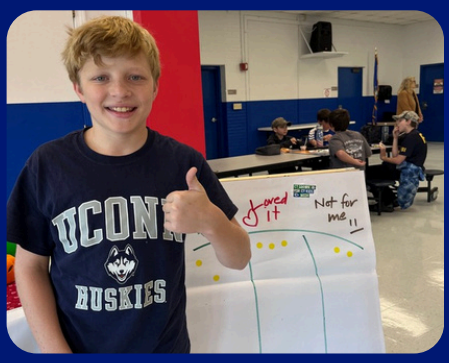
In Region 14, we believe in continuous improvement and are constantly seeking ways to enhance our instructional practices to positively impact student outcomes. We collaborate and communicate with colleagues from across the state regularly and adapt and adjust our practices when another district shares practices that have proven more successful than ours. We remain committed to evaluating our practices and prioritizing hands-on, face-to-face instruction over independent screen time whenever possible.

WMS MARKS CT GROWN FOR KIDSWEEK

Woodbury Middle School celebrated CT Grown for Kids Week with a terrific tasting event in October. Region 14 Schools Food Services Director Costa Lefkimiatis and local UCONN Farm to School Representative Kim Hughes served up some delicious apple-cabbage slaw made fresh by staff with local Honeycrisp apples from Hidden Gem Orchard in Southbury. Students were excited about the event and eager to rate the apple recipe with a thumbs up. CT Grown for Kids Week is an annual event held the first full week in October that celebrates and supports local agriculture, public education, and our community's commitment to healthy, nutritious meals in schools.







NHS CULINARY PROGRAM TAKES ADVANTAGE OF LOCAL PRODUCE

Nonnewaug High School's Advanced Culinary and Farm-to-Table classes headed to March Farm in Bethlehem last month for an afternoon of apple picking and camaraderie. Both classes will use the crop for recipes in class and in preparation for an apple tart recipe for the annual Senior Citizen Holiday Meal in December. Thank you, March Farm, for welcoming Region 14 students in their agricultural and culinary journeys.













Nonnewaug High School students in the Farm to Table class prepared homemade tomato soup and grilled cheese sandwiches. The students worked together to chop the tomatoes, garlic, and onions that were grown for the class over the summer. They added it all to a pot to simmer. The Farm to Table class is co-taught by Agriscience teacher Eric Birkenberger and Media Arts teacher Katie Blake. This class will make connections between agricultural science, sustainability, and culinary arts by teaching students how to grow, harvest, and cook local food.





One of the benefits of having a high school that houses a top-notch culinary program paired with a campus surrounded by nature is foraging in your own backyard. Nonnewaug High School Advanced Culinary students took advantage of the beautiful weather in October to forage for the Autumn olive berries that grow all over campus. These local berries are delicious and have a sweet cherry-like flavor. The students will turn their olive berry haul into dried fruit leather. They will puree the olive berries, add local honey, and then dehydrate it for several hours.

99TH ANNUAL FFA CONVENTION WRAP UP

The Woodbury FFA chapter sent 27 students and graduates to the 99th National FFA Convention and Expo in Indianapolis, IN, from October 21st-24th.

Twenty-two (22) students competed in career development events (CDEs) such as Dairy Judging, Environmental/Natural Resources, Floriculture, Meat Evaluation, and Parliamentary Procedure, earning accolades that added to the chapter's already impressive history.

Eight students received their American FFA Degree, the highest award offered in the organization, which less than 1% of members receive nationwide. In addition to competitions, students performed community service, participated in leadership workshops, and learned about the industry by attending the College and Career Exposition.

Overall, Woodbury came home with 4 National Silver Teams and 1 National Bronze Team. Individuals on all of these teams earned a total of 9 National Silver Medals and 7 National Bronze Medals for the Woodbury FFA Chapter during the week-long convention, which was attended by over 70,000 FFA members and guests from across the country. The National FFA Organization is the largest youth leadership organization in the country.



The Environmental/Natural Resources team earned Silver. (Corbin Fretz, Makayla Popp, Isabelle Longley, and Connor Irvin.



Congratulations to the American Degree Award recipients – Kyleigh Paige, Nicole Perssico, Alyssa Gravel, Samantha Kostka, and Alexa Sweeney. This is the highest degree an FFA member can earn, showing their incredible leadership abilities and participation in the community throughout their FFA career. This degree exemplifies a student's dedication to their SAE (Supervised Agricultural Experience.



The Woodbury FFA Parliamentary Procedure LDE Team earned Silver. They represented CT well, from their hours of general knowledge tests and team events to conducting a parliamentary-correct meeting. These students have worked hard, continue to set their own personal goals, and then surpass them.



ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS WELCOME FIRE DEPARTMENTS FOR FIRE SAFETY EVENTS



Members of the Bethlehem and Woodbury Fire Departments visited our elementary schools in October for Fire Prevention Week presentations.

Firefighters spoke to students about the importance of smoke alarms, a family meeting place, stop-drop-and-crawl and stop-drop-and-roll, and using 9-1-1 for emergencies.

They taught students how they get ready for fighting fire by putting on 45 pounds of safety gear, and how they use thermal cameras to see through dense smoke and total darkness. We are grateful to our local emergency workers who make time to visit our students.





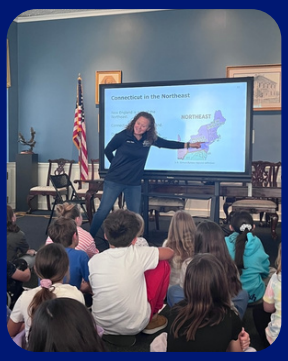




SOCIAL STUDIES DAY EVENTS







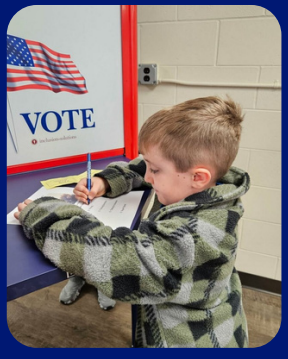




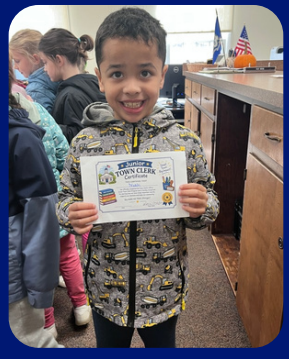
Our elementary schools marked Social Studies Day with a variety of activities for students. Classes welcomed special guests to speak with students about their roles in the community. Guests included a Region 14 bus driver, police and K9 officers, an Emergency Management director, a mortgage loan broker, a music therapist, a physical therapist, as well as others. Some students took a walking tour of the community to see how a town works. We are thankful to all the community members who visit our schools and share their time and talents with our Region 14 students.











FINE ARTS SPOTLIGHT



18 members of the Nonnewaug High School Band and Choir spent part of this month rehearsing and performing at the Berkshire League Musical Festival at Lewis Mills High School.

Student musicians from Nonnewaug, Gilbert, Housatonic Valley, Lakeview, Northwestern Regional, Shepaug, Terryville, Thomaston, Torrington, and Lewis Mills gathered for intensive all-day rehearsals followed by an Ensemble Concert featuring the combined Berkshire League chorus, band, and orchestra. Congratulations to our NHS Director of Music, Nicholas Ciasullo, and the students on a wonderful performance.

Congratulations to our Region 14 students whose work was chosen for the After School Arts Program Celebration of Young Photographers exhibit. Photographs from 10 Nonnewaug High School students and one Woodbury Middle School student were chosen from over 400 submissions from students across 37 towns! This year's ASAP theme was Traditions. The students were honored at the annual Celebration of Young Photographers event, a juried gallery exhibition and awards ceremony on the Hartford Art School campus, on Sunday, November 1. Congratulations to these talented Region 14 students: from NHS -- Ella DiElsi, Domenic DiStefano, Bryce Gilbert, Gemma Hedrei, Kaya Jones, Allison Mannello, Vincent Matozzo, Lila Rogers, Madelin St. Marie, Lorehna Vega, and Bennett Metz from WMS





CONNECT WITH REGION 14

In Region 14, communication is one of the fundamental links in the relationship between our schools and our community. We look to communicate effectively, and often with parents and members of the Bethlehem and Woodbury communities on many platforms. School principals send newsletters to parents every Monday afternoon throughout the school year. The Region 14 website is also updated regularly with information on school and athletic calendars, Board of Education agendas, meetings, and videos, Curriculum information, Weekly Principal Updates, News Articles, and more.

Please also look for additional regular communications from Region 14:

- Facebook and Instagram pages updated regularly with initiatives, programming, and happenings in our schools
- PowerSchool updates and email alerts from Bright Arrow
- Weekly Digital Backpack of flyers relating to school and community events
- Region 14 Live Stream channels
- Region 14 App on iTunes and Google Play

www.ctreg14.org

Email Alerts
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Digital Backpack
emails Monday

PowerSchool

School Principal
Updates Weekly