

West Hartford Public School District

Agenda Item: Opening of School: Overview and Observations

Meeting Date: September 6, 2011

From: Karen L. List, Superintendent



Approximately 10,000 students crossed the thresholds of our 16 schools on September 1. We faced great challenges in August with the earthquake and hurricane that Mother Nature threw at us and yet those challenges did not deter the tireless efforts of our staff to ready our schools and classrooms for West Hartford students. We share an eagerness to see what the new year brings and to build on the successes of last year. Looking at last year I am pleased to note that, while relating to only a fraction of the mission of our schools, our 2010-11 CMT and CAPT scores were the highest ever for the third year in a row. Public support for the schools continues to build as higher test scores show that we are meeting the community's high expectations and our continuing lower relative per pupil spending means we are being careful in our requests for funding. As an indication of growing community support, the Board was successful in passing the 2011-12 budget without a referendum. We can't lose sight of what happened last year and need to once again applaud the self- sacrifice of the teachers and the many other public school employees who are taking a wage freeze in the 2011-12 school year. Their sacrifice makes my job and the Board's job of providing the resources to maintain and improve the necessary education services that are yielding such wonderful results much easier. I am grateful both to them and to the broader community for all that they have done to support the excellence in the West Hartford Public Schools in these difficult fiscal times.

We have new and returning leaders and leaders in new roles among us – Mr. Paul Vicinus is Director of Teaching & Assessment, Mr. Juan Melián is the new Principal of the Florence E. Smith School of Science, Math & Technology, Mr. Patrick Gustafson is the new AP at King Philip Middle School, Mrs. Catherine Buchholz is the new English Department Supervisor for Bristow, King Philip and Hall and Mr. Andrew Mayo is the new Department Supervisor for the Fine & Performing Arts. I thank our leaders for their vigilance to open our schools with excellent communication, essential resources, superb teachers and support staff, and buildings that sparkle.

To inspire and prepare all students to realize their potential and enhance our global community

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The Mission Framework and District Goals guide our work. We have revised our District Development and Performance Plan for Continuous Improvement and School Development and Performance Plans for Continuous Improvement based on the Framework and Goals. The strategic actions in our plan are:

- ✓ Using the Model of Continuous Improvement, we will strengthen standards, curriculum, instruction & assessment
- ✓ Create an environment & community that fosters intellectually, physically & emotionally healthy learning and living
- ✓ Create the conditions that promote collaborative inquiry through shared and distributed leadership

These actions specify the efforts and performance indicators that guide and provide the accountability for our work. Our ultimate goal is to improve student performance and make schools places for children to experience, joy, wonder, persistence, hope, and positive, productive relationships.

In closing, Dr. Howley, Mr. Moore, Mr. Ledwith, Mr. McGrath, and Mr. Ward have provided detailed reports regarding our preparations for the opening of school that follow this report. I am grateful for this team and the remarkable leaders, teachers, custodians, secretaries, coaches, nutrition services staff, residency staff, information technology staff, paraprofessionals, maintenance workers, and volunteers who work collectively to ensure that our schools open smoothly and provide an environment where all students are safe and challenged beyond the expected.