

**BOARD OF EDUCATION  
SOUTHINGTON, CONNECTICUT**

Informational Only \_\_\_\_\_ Board Meeting Date December 9, 2021

Decision Requested X Agenda Code 11 b

**AGENDA REPORTING FORM**

**Agenda Topic:** Superintendent's Annual Report 2020-2021

**Summary of Issue:** The Superintendent's Annual Report summarizes the significant events and issues of the preceding school year. This report is incorporated into the Town's Annual Report.

**Background:** N/A

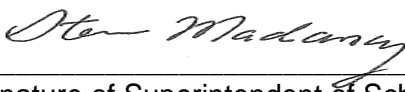
**Alternative Strategies:** N/A

**Cost (if applicable):** N/A **Funding Source:** N/A

**Beginning Date of Program or Project:** July 1, 2020

**Ending Date of Program or Project:** June 30, 2021

**Recommendation or Comment:** Recommend that the Superintendent's Annual Report for the 2020-2021 school year be approved as submitted.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Superintendent of Schools

Titles of Attachments:

1. Superintendent's Annual Report 2020-2021

# **SOUTHINGTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS**



## **Superintendent's Annual Report 2020-2021**



# **Superintendent's Annual Report**

## **2020-2021**

### **Southington Board of Education**

Colleen W. Clark, Board Chairperson  
Joseph M. Baczewski, Vice Chairperson  
Dawn L. Anastasio, Secretary  
Sean M. Carson  
James J. Chrzanowski  
David J. Derynoski  
Zaya G. Oshana  
Jasper P. Williams

### **Central Office Staff**

Steven G. Madancy, Superintendent of Schools  
Frank M. Pepe, Assistant Superintendent of Schools  
Rebecca Cavallaro, Director of Pupil Services  
Peter J. Romano, Director of Operations  
Jennifer Mellitt, Director of Business & Finance  
Michelle Passamano, Human Resource Manager

# Superintendent's Annual Report

## 2020-2021

<b><u>TABLE OF CONTENTS</u></b>	<b><u>Pages</u></b>
Superintendent's Executive Summary .....	1-2
ELA - Curriculum & Instruction .....	3-4
Mathematics - Curriculum & Instruction .....	5-7
Business Department .....	8-10
Operations Department .....	11-14
Human Resource Department .....	15-17
Pupil Personnel Services .....	18-20
School-Based Activities .....	21-56



**Southington Public Schools**  
**Superintendent's Annual Report 2020-2021**

**SUPERINTENDENT'S EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

*Steven G. Madancy, Superintendent of Schools*

The 2020-2021 school year proved to be one of the most challenging times in education history. The school year started off with uncertainty around re-opening and models of instruction due to fluctuating prevalence rates of the Covid 19 virus and flexibilities the district was required to provide per Connecticut State Department of Education guidelines at the direction of the governor. Given this uncertainty, districts were provided with little time to react and respond to state mandates relative to education models during the pandemic. Southington was not immune from this.

A source of pride amongst staff, families and the community were that the district's elementary and middle schools were fully open to in-person learning from day one. This was an occurrence in only a handful of communities across the state. Additionally, the high school was open to in person learning in a hybrid model from day one, and early on, accommodations were made to allow students in need, or desiring interest, to attend daily as a third cohort within the model. Further, the district was able to staff and operate a completely remote school (Southington Remote Learning Academy) for K-5 families opting for such a model under the governor's required flexibility requirements consisting of 24 elementary classroom teachers, a full-time administrator and support services. This proved to be a monumental but tremendously successful task given the abbreviated time to establish and implement. The resilience displayed by all staff, remote and in-person, to provide quality teaching and learning despite the tremendous learning curve associated with varied models of instruction, social emotional needs of students, and enduring the pandemic themselves as staff with families of their own, is a testament to the professionalism and dedication of the Southington Public Schools staff and faculty.

In order to address appropriate and efficient use of technology due to the varied needs and models, the district provided extensive training and support to all teachers in the use of several digital learning tools. These learning tools include learning management systems, Google Classroom and Canvas, and many other software tools meant to engage and present materials and lessons to students in flexible ways given the needed fluctuating virtual and in-person learning occurring in instances of quarantine or for families opting for the remote model.

The district also opportunized federal grant funding to shift from a 'Bring Your Own Device' model, supplementing devices for families without devices with district devices, to a complete '1:1' model. This provided all students district devices imaged with common software, safety and monitoring controls, and training to provide for a more seamless experience with technology during teaching and learning. This was a tremendously successful, yet challenging undertaking given the unpackaging, asset tagging, imaging, inventorying, and deployment of 6000+ devices to students.

## Superintendent's Annual Report 2020-2021 Executive Summary

For students who struggled with the challenges of the pandemic, the district established and implemented a 'first of its kind' credit recovery model for high school students to regain opportunity for credit by completing teacher curated modules addressing deficit areas identified. This individualized model, personalized for each student, was successful at assisting students impacted by the various challenges associated with pandemic learning. Further, for students in grade k-12 needing academic support and remediation, the district offered a Summer Academy, complete with meals and transportation serving approximately 700 students district wide as opposed to the average 200+ students who traditionally receive summer support programming.

In the spring the district began meeting with an established Elementary Facilities Committee consisting of a subcommittee of the Board in conjunction with Colliers Project Management Group to begin exploring and discussing the future use and plans of the three remaining elementary schools yet to be remediated. (Derynoski, Flanders and Kelley)

Early work was conducted consisting of site reviews and layouts, enrollment and facility reviews, environmental site assessments, and discussion with town officials over the benefits and advantages to potentially consolidating eight elementary schools to seven elementary schools with consideration to which schools were best suited for future new construction. This committee work will continue into the 2021-2022 school year with an eye towards a referendum in the Fall of 2022.

Also in the spring, with prevalence rates declining, the district was proud to offer more relaxed mitigation allowing for several successful year-end events to celebrate the learning and achievements of all students across the district at all levels including field days, awards and scholarship nights, senior activities, and the culminating graduation.

Entering the 2021-2022 school year, continued uncertainty remains surrounding the pandemic; however, the district is going to be strategic and intentional with everything we do to try and focus on outcomes and initiatives that were prioritized pre-pandemic.

In closing, the entire Southington Public Schools administrative team should be recognized for the true professionalism and grit in operating schools daily this past year despite the tremendous challenges associated with effective mitigation, often taking them away from their families on nights and weekends, to communicate in a timely manner with families impacted by the virus. This ensured the safety of all and provided students the best possible chance to continue in-person learning whenever possible.

## Superintendent's Annual Report 2020-2021

### **ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS CURRICULUM & INSTRUCTION**

*Stephanie Lawlor, K-8 English Language Arts & K-5 Social Studies Coordinator*

#### **Elementary English Language Arts (ELA)**

Teachers continued to implement the Teachers College *Reading and Writing Units of Study* during the 2020-2021 school year. The English Language Arts (ELA)/Social Studies Coordinator and the literacy coaches adjusted the curriculum calendar to allow time for teachers to differentiate lessons to focus on the skills that may have been disrupted during the spring of 2020. The pacing was also adjusted to allow time for social-emotional learning and mask breaks. Virtual coaching was provided by the literacy coaches, as well as through virtual resources provided by the Teachers College Reading and Writing Project.

During the 2021-2022 school year, over 300 students opted to attend the Southington Elementary Remote Learning Academy. ELA materials and resources for students attending the Remote Learning Academy were prepared and distributed every six weeks through the ELA/Social Studies Coordinator's office. These materials included leveled independent reading books for students in Grades K-2, differentiated paper choices for writing, and book choices for clubs in Grades 3-5. In addition, literacy coaching was provided to teachers in implementing units virtually. Intervention in reading was also provided to students by the literacy coaches and tutors.

Implementation of the *Units of Study in Phonics, Grades K-2* continued across the district. The 2020-2021 cohort of teachers received virtual coaching on how to implement the lessons at an exemplary level and studied multiple data points to drive instruction. This cohort will continue to receive in-person coaching this year to shore up implementation. In June, the 2021-2022 cohort of teachers received their materials and engaged in virtual professional learning. Teachers learned the guiding principles behind this phonics approach and began planning for September. At the conclusion of the 2021-2022 school year, all elementary schools will be implementing the new phonics curriculum.

#### **Middle School English Language Arts (ELA)**

The Middle School ELA department continued to implement the *Reading and Writing Units of Study*. Teachers adjusted the ELA pacing calendar at the start of the year to build time to get to know students and to account for time to support social-emotional learning. Teachers collaborated to create engaging, meaningful lessons for both in-person and at home learners using *Canvas*. Technology tools such as *Pear Deck*, *Padlet*, and *Google Meets* were used to engage all students.

#### **High School English Language Arts (ELA)**

The department leader worked with teachers to redesign instruction and adjust pacing due to the implications of implementing a hybrid model. The department leader worked with teachers to prioritize standards and to support differentiation. The ELA Coordinator and the department leader reviewed and prioritized courses in need of curriculum revision and will begin that work in the 2021-2022 school year.

## Superintendent's Annual Report 2020-2021 – ELA Curriculum & Instruction

### **Elementary Social Studies**

Teachers in Grades K-5 continued to implement the current adopted social studies curriculum. Students in K-2 explored a variety of topics through read-aloud, videos, and hands-on projects. These topics included community, geography, holidays, and economics. In Grades 3-4, students studied the history of Connecticut and engaged in a study of the United States Geography. Students in Grade 5 studied the Age of Exploration, Colonial America, and the American Revolution.

In January, 33 teachers along with the ELA/Social Studies Coordinator attended the “Black History IS American History” Institute offered by Teachers College, Columbia University. This institute aimed to teach educators how to move away from the canned narratives in teaching Black history and how to use texts to teach about the struggles and triumphs of Black people in the United States. These teachers were invited to be a part of the Elementary Social Studies Curriculum Committee and will collaborate with the K-5 Social Studies Coordinator to revise the K-5 social studies curriculum.

The ELA/Social Studies Coordinator presented a new unit of study in reading and social studies for Grade 5 to the Curriculum and Instruction Committee. Three teachers piloted the new unit called “Reading in the Content Areas: How Key Events Shape Nations” with a focus on the Civil Rights Movement and the continuing fight for equality. This unit aims to strengthen students' reading research skills and support students in accessing complex texts. This unit also supported the Grade 5 social studies standards of exploring the struggle for freedom, equality, and social justice by exploring the Civil Rights Movement. This unit will be presented to the Curriculum and Instruction Committee for Board of Education approval in the 2021-2022 school year.



## Superintendent's Annual Report 2020-2021

### **MATHEMATICS CURRICULUM & INSTRUCTION**

*Amy Zappone, Mathematics Coordinator*

#### **Elementary Math**

Over the course of the year, all teachers in Grades K-2 implemented the newly adopted *Ready Classroom Mathematics* curriculum. Teachers in Grades K-2 were provided with ongoing virtual coaching sessions to support the implementation of the units and best practices for math instruction. The math specialists worked diligently to ensure that teachers were provided with coaching support for each unit of instruction. The use of technology such as *Loom* and *Google Suite* assisted the department with virtual coaching, as COVID-19 restrictions were in play. Next year, the *Ready Classroom Mathematics* curriculum will roll up to Grades 3-5 across the district. This summer, teachers in Grades 3-5 have been provided the opportunity to engage in professional development to prepare themselves for new curriculum implementation next year. Additional professional learning for the Grade 3-5 teacher cohort will continue throughout the 2021-2022 school year. The district looks forward to seeing the long-term positive impacts of a comprehensive, vertically aligned curriculum in Grades K-5.

During the 2020-2021 school year, the math curriculum in Grades K-5 was adjusted to meet COVID-19 related demands such as increased time spent on social-emotional learning, loss of instructional time for mask breaks, and physical spacing/distancing limitations during instruction. The elementary math specialists and District Math Coordinator provided teachers with truncated scope and sequences to guide teaching and learning during this challenging year. Teachers and students also utilized *i-Ready* and *SplashLearn*, which are digital platforms that support differentiated instruction in math. Next year, the department will benefit from having increased instructional time to implement the entirety of the math curriculum, with the anticipation of fewer COVID-19 restrictions. Teachers and specialists are eager to return to utilizing the Math Workshop model in K-5 classrooms so they can support differentiation and student collaboration.

#### **Middle School Math**

This year, the middle school mathematics department implemented the Board of Education adopted *Illustrative Mathematics* curriculum in Grades 6-8. Although year one of implementation was less than ideal with COVID-19 restrictions in place, teachers and students made the most of their learning time in math. Teachers received ongoing Tier 1 coaching support from the math coach with a focus on curriculum implementation. Teachers also worked collaboratively with the math specialist to support student growth through the district's Scientific Research-Based Interventions (SRBI) program.

The middle school math department adjusted to a revised scope and sequence this year that took into consideration the reduction of instructional time coupled with a strong focus on student social-emotional well-being. Common Core State Standards were prioritized by grade level to ensure major clusters were given adequate time. Teachers and students used *Canvas* as their learning management system to support both in-person and remote learners. Technology tools such as *Desmos* and *Pear Deck* were used to engage students digitally through interactive instruction. Next

## Superintendent's Annual Report 2020-2021 – Mathematics

school year, teachers look forward to ensuring a balance between technology tools and hands-on, paper and pencil tasks in math classes.

### **High School Math**

The high school math department welcomed new leadership as former John F. Kennedy Middle School math teacher, Mr. Thomas Hinman, assumed the role of department leader. The department engaged in ongoing professional learning around differentiated instruction with a focus on adjusting daily learning tasks to meet the needs of all learners. Teachers also continued evaluating their current curriculum by narrowing in on assessment design. The department spent time analyzing assessments to ensure that they provide students with the rigor and depth of knowledge necessary to support Southington's Vision of a Graduate and capstone project.

As Southington High School implemented a hybrid learning model this year, there were implications to course design and curriculum pacing. The department leader worked with teachers to prioritize content to be taught, keeping Common Core priorities at the forefront. The department looks forward to upcoming curriculum revisions for courses such as Consumer Math. Curriculum revision work for selected courses began this spring and will continue throughout the summer and next school year.

### **Elementary Science**

Teachers in Grades K-2 continued implementing science curriculum, using FOSS (Full Option Science System) kits to support hands-on learning. Students in the primary grades experienced several life science units that included opportunities to observe chicks hatching, observe caterpillars form into butterflies, compare goldfish and guppies, observe tadpole growth, and observe ladybug development. In Grades 3-5, teachers implemented newly adopted Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) units of study that focused on scientific inquiry through phenomena-based instruction. Students in Grades 4 and 5 also engaged in a mini-unit that focused on the process of inventing. All students in Grade 5 were tasked with developing inventions and creating presentations to share their design process. At the May 2021 Board of Education meeting, Southington Public Schools was pleased to announce that two fifth-grade students, one from Kelly Elementary School and one from South End Elementary School, received awards at the Connecticut Invention Convention State Finals. These students were also moved forward to the national level for recognition of their work.

The district continued its strong partnership with the Lewis Educational Agricultural Farm (LEAF) this year. Founder and Executive Director of LEAF, Mr. Mark Ramsay, and the K-5 District Science Coordinator collaboratively worked with students and teachers at all elementary schools to plant school gardens. The district looks forward to continued work with LEAF to support science instruction and community engagement. In addition, the district continued planning with YMCA Camper Sloper staff to plan for science-related field trips for the 2021-2022 school year.

Next school year, the district is excited to welcome South End Elementary School teacher, Melissa O'Neil, to the team as a K-5 District Science Specialist. Melissa will work with teachers and the

## Superintendent's Annual Report 2020-2021 – Mathematics

Science Coordinator to develop Next Generation Science Standards curriculum and support curriculum implementation through professional learning and coaching.

## Superintendent's Annual Report 2020-2021

### **BUSINESS DEPARTMENT**

*Sherri P. DiNello, Director of Business & Finance*

The Business Office accomplished the following items during the 2020-2021 school year:

#### **Budget Development 2021-2022**

During the 2020-2021 school year, the Board of Education 2021-2022 Operating Budget was developed and presented. The Southington Board of Finance had approved a \$1.8 million increase to the Operating Budget; however, the Town Council reduced that by \$1.5 million, leaving the Board of Education 2021-2022 Operating Budget with an increase of \$291,181 or .29%. Their action required the Board of Education to balance the budget utilizing grant funds authorized under the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (ARP ESSER).

#### **COVID-19 Pandemic and School Reopening**

The Business Office played an integral part in planning for the safe reopening of schools in September. Here are some of the highlights:

#### **Purchasing Office**

Securing and purchasing personal protective equipment (PPE) with a limited supply chain was challenging. The Accounting Manager did a tremendous job ensuring schools had masks, gloves, sanitizer, and a variety of other items needed by the custodial staff to ensure schools were safe to reopen. In addition, furniture was moved or ordered when necessary to maximize student space for social distancing. Carts for teachers were purchased, allowing them to travel to classrooms and students to remain in small cohorts. Tracking purchases to maximize grant reimbursement was a very important responsibility of the department as well.

#### **Payroll Office**

Many new staff members were hired in all roles throughout the district to ensure schools opened safely. In addition, several staff members had assignment changes or hours extended to meet the needs of students. The payroll office set up new employees and changed roles to ensure staff members were paid appropriately and that additional costs were tracked for maximum grant reimbursement.

#### **Food Service**

The universal availability of free meals for all students continued throughout the 2020-2021 school year. This had a large negative financial impact on the Food Service program. The district had fewer students attending school because of the remote option and hybrid schedule at Southington High School. Students attending in-person ate in many locations throughout the school, including libraries, classrooms, and music rooms. Food was prepared, packaged, and delivered to these areas, which reduced the appeal to students by limiting choices. The Food Service Director worked extremely hard to provide staffing coverage during the pandemic, as additional payroll hours were needed to accommodate this workload. Additionally, her staff made meals available to families of

## Superintendent's Annual Report 2020-2021 – Business Department

remote and hybrid learners by offering breakfast and lunches in the evenings as a grab-and-go option at DePaolo Middle School.

### **Office of the Director of Business**

Managing the Board of Education's Operating Budget and the new grants provided to Southington Public Schools due to the pandemic was a new challenge. Information was changing weekly regarding grant application deadlines, appropriate use of grant funds, and the timing of the availability. The goal was to maximize resources to meet the needs of students and staff while using the federal funding as it became available.

In addition, the change in the number of student school days in the calendar and the new concept of remote learning days required the Director of Business to work with union leadership on Memorandums of Agreements (MOA) to accommodate their schedules and workdays.

### **Employee Wellness**

The Healthy & Wise Committee continued to run successful employee wellness programs throughout the pandemic. The use of a new platform, *Wellable*, provided an online app for staff to have access to on-demand fitness classes, health tips, and challenges. Participation increased with the use of the app and the feedback from staff has been positive.

### **Unexpended Funds Account**

An additional Non-lapsing Education Account was established for the year-end 2020 through the cooperation of the Board of Education, the Board of Finance, and the Town Council. Connecticut General Statute 10-248a permits this account to be created by depositing unexpended Board of Education Operating Budget funds into the account from the prior fiscal year within the statutory limit. The funds can be used for educational purposes only and the expenditures shall be authorized by the local Board of Education.

In the fall, it was determined that this account would be utilized for unanticipated COVID-19 related expenses. However, once grant funding was secured and the district knew the account would not be needed for operational expenses, a list of projects was provided to the Board of Education for approval. In addition, two loans were provided to the Food Service program from this account to cover program losses in the amount of \$300,000 and \$500,000. In June of 2021, the \$500,000 loan was repaid to the Non-lapsing Account by utilizing the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (ESSER II) grant.

### **Negotiations – Southington Secretarial & Food Service Employees, Nutmeg Independent Public Safety Employees Union (NIPSEU)**

The Director of Business & Finance worked with the Personnel Manager throughout the spring negotiating a new three-year contract with the secretaries and food service workers along with their union representative. Negotiations will continue into the 2021-2022 school year.

## Superintendent's Annual Report 2020-2021 – Business Department

### **Negotiations – Southington Custodial & Maintenance Employees, American Federation of State, County & Municipal Employees (AFSCME)**

The Director of Business & Finance negotiated a four-year contract extension with the AFSCME bargaining group. The extension was accomplished without opening the contract for full negotiations and saved the district legal funds because an attorney was not used for the negotiation process. The new four-year contract is for the period of July 1, 2021 – June 30, 2025.

### **Five-Year Copier Lease**

The Accounting Manager worked with the Board of Education's current vendor to replace copiers throughout the district in the summer of 2021 by entering into a new five-year lease. To maximize resources, a print management system will be included as part of the new lease.

## Superintendent's Annual Report 2020-2021

### **OPERATIONS DEPARTMENT**

*Peter J. Romano, Director of Operations*

The Operations Office accomplished the following items during the 2020-2021 school year:

#### **COVID-19**

The year began with preparations during the summer months and continued throughout the school year addressing building occupancy and custodial concerns for COVID-19. Guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Department of Public Health, and Connecticut State Department of Education was implemented, including but not limited to HVAC (Heating, Ventilation, & Air Conditioning) modifications, facility sanitization programs, additional custodial support, hand sanitizer devices, relocating of furniture in classrooms for social distancing, transportation modifications, installation of plexiglass and protection screening, tents for mask break areas, testing of potable water, and removing the public from the use of the building for rentals.

#### **Construction and Building System Improvements**

- At the close of the fiscal year, the Maintenance staff completed 2,836 work orders that were submitted by the administration and staff at the schools.
- Water bottle filling stations have been added to all schools. This was primarily a COVID initiative to reduce transmission of germs via the water fountains.
- The recently updated National Fire Protection Association codes require that every five years the district performs some additional inspection and testing on the fire department connections for all wet, dry, and deluge sprinkler systems. Testing was completed this year and the results have been shared with the Southington Fire Department.
- Ongoing Sidewalk Repair and Replacement Program: A substantial portion of concrete sidewalk was replaced at the west entry at Derynoski Elementary School.
- Painting in the schools is an ongoing program. This year we painted the remaining classrooms and all the door frames at both Flanders and Kelley Elementary School.
- We continued with our replacement program of deteriorated stormwater catch basins. This year, four catch basins were replaced at Derynoski Elementary School and two catch basins were replaced at Strong Elementary School.
- Continued improvement on strategies to ensure the reliable, long-term performance and extension of the life cycle of roofs districtwide.
- Continued working toward completion of the required improvements outlined in the Civil Rights Compliance review at Southington High School.

## Superintendent's Annual Report 2020-2021 – Operations Department

- The replacement of the boiler located in the Southington High School Freshman Wing was completed. The existing boiler was replaced with two high efficiency gas boilers for redundancy.
- The major circuit breakers at Southington High School were load tested, cleaned, and repaired as necessary. This was needed to protect the school from a major electrical failure and for the safety of staff and the building.
- Classroom modifications were made at Southington High School for the Achieve, Sewing and Bake Shop programs.
- Funding has been dedicated to the removal and replacement of the existing concrete floor, a new rubber floor system to be placed over the new concrete, and new workout equipment for the Southington High School Fitness Room. All items have been awarded. Work will begin in July 2021.
- The brick and mortar on a substantial portion of the south side of Southington High School received a waterproof sealcoating. The caulk joints were repaired and replaced as needed.
- The 2,000-gallon underground oil tank at Karen Smith Academy was removed. We worked with Eversource to procure natural gas service. We converted the existing boiler to operate with a gas burner.
- The previously abandoned underground 15,000-gallon oil storage tank located in the driveway of Derynoski Elementary School was removed and the driveway was patched.
- A substantial portion of the shingle roof was removed and replaced at South End Elementary School. This resolved the random roof leaking issues that had been occurring since shortly after the opening of the building in 2010. The cost for this correction was absorbed by the roof manufacturer, General Aniline & Film (GAF), after years of pursuit by the district.
- Funds were dedicated to the removal of a 10,000-gallon underground oil storage tank at Thalberg Elementary School. The tank will be replaced with an above-ground oil storage tank. The work has been awarded and is anticipated to be completed prior to the start of the 2021-2022 school year.

### **Energy Conservation**

- Energy Management System (EMS): With ten of the district's schools on the web-based dashboard, we continued to monitor systems and programmed them for optimum efficiency and health of the buildings. The EMS at Oshana Elementary School, South End Elementary School, and the Southington High School Ag-Sci building received upgrades which allow



## Superintendent's Annual Report 2020-2021 – Operations Department

us to run a purge cycle overnight to introduce fresh air into the buildings similar to other schools.

- Eversource revamped their Energy Conservation Rebate program. We committed to participate. Electricity usage monitoring equipment has been installed at Southington High School. The program started June 1, 2020.

### **Reporting**

- SCG-1050: Operations completed and submitted the SCG-1050 report (formally ED050) to the state as required by the Department of Education. This report must be submitted every three years. The reporting is extensive, requiring 135 pages to complete. A sizable portion of the report identifies the building sizes, improvements, occupancy, building systems, and conditions of the facility.
- AHERA Report: As required by the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the district worked with our environmental consultant to perform inspections and sampling for any asbestos containing materials. This report is required every three years. A management plan was completed. Monitoring and any necessary action are taken to prevent and reduce asbestos hazards.
- Radon Testing Programs: Air quality testing for radon was performed as per EPA and state guidelines for ongoing testing in the schools. Radon testing is required at all schools on a three-year cycle.

### **Health and Safety**

- Operations, in conjunction with the Southington Police and Fire Departments, coordinated and participated in unannounced emergency drills and fire drills at all schools, districtwide.
- Additional two-way radios were received, programmed, and deployed to schools. Eight of the radios were purchased via a Schaller grant from the Community Foundation of Greater New Britain.
- Polychlorinated biphenyl (PCB) testing was conducted at J.A. DePaolo Middle School. We received relief from the EPA for testing this year only at J.F. Kennedy Middle School and the John Weichsel Municipal Center. The test results have been substantially lower than EPA guidelines for action, with many areas registering a non-detected result. The Operations Department continues to work with the district's environmental attorney to seek relief from this testing.

## Superintendent's Annual Report 2020-2021 – Operations Department

### **Administrative Enhancements**

- Maintenance of an online process created for reporting of districtwide fire and safety drills. Drills are reported annually to the Connecticut State Division of Energy Management and Homeland Security.
- The Operations Department continues to build on its electronic infrastructure. Operations works closely with all the schools in the district. The transition to electronic documentation for the department has allowed greater efficiencies and information sharing throughout the district. A considerable amount of work has been moved to the *Google Docs* format, including sheets and forms for transportation tracking logs, transportation requests and complaints, snow removal vendors and events, lawn maintenance vendors, and custodian scheduling.

### **Districtwide and Town Collaboration**

- Shared Resources: The Operations Department continued its ongoing collaboration with the town to complete repairs, service calls, and projects at town buildings, as needed.

## Superintendent's Annual Report 2020-2021

### **HUMAN RESOURCE DEPARTMENT**

*Michelle Passamano, Human Resource Manager*

The 2020-2021 fiscal year brought few new initiatives from the Human Resource Department, as the impact of the pandemic demanded adjustments in the way we do business. Consistency in processes between the Town of Southington and the Southington Public Schools was essential as it relates to the safety of all employees.

#### **COVID-19 Pandemic and the Human Resource Department**

At the close of the 2019-2020 fiscal year, all Town and Southington Public School employees returned to their offices and buildings with return-to-work safety guidelines. The summer of 2020 was active with developing plans for the reopening of schools. To ensure safety in the schools, we hired additional support staff, including custodians and substitutes. A Remote Learning Academy was offered for students and families who did not send their children to their assigned schools. With the implementation of the remote academy, we hired approximately 20 teachers for one-year positions. Mitigation strategies were strongly enforced throughout the town, and all employees exercised caution and put safety as a top priority.

Updates and guidance were provided by the Director of Health on a weekly basis. These meetings prepared the department to better assist and guide employees when faced with the challenges of quarantine and/or illness. The focus was to offer all Town and school district employees the opportunity to connect with a person, any day and time, who could provide them with guidance. Considering the number of employees impacted by COVID-19, this was challenging but proved successful.

Additional weekly communication included virtual meetings with human resource leaders in surrounding towns. We reviewed best practices and networked to ensure those practices were consistent.

Obtaining the vaccination for COVID-19 was essential. The department played an active role in assisting Town and school district employees in scheduling appointments through the Vaccine Administration Management System (VAMS) and coordinating two vaccination clinics through Hartford Healthcare (March 14 and March 28).

In April, a virtual meeting was coordinated for all union leaders of the school district explaining the importance of gathering vaccination status from employees. The Human Resource Department created a video and submitted a survey to all employees explaining the reasons why we were requiring this information. The survey was successful, as 1,100 of the 1,250 school district employees submitted their responses.

Throughout the 2020-2021 fiscal year, the department documented over 600 reports of either close contact or confirmed cases between the Town and the school district. Contact tracing and follow-up correspondence was provided for all reports.

## Superintendent's Annual Report 2020-2021 – Human Resource Department

### **Hiring Process**

Best hiring practices continue to be a focus for the department. Advertising for positions has expanded to include Indeed, the Department of Labor, and various business organizations, depending upon the opening. When seeking a certified teaching position, the State Department of Education provides an excel list of all who hold that specific endorsement throughout the State of Connecticut. An email is then forwarded to those contacts with a message encouraging them to apply.

An overview of turnover for the Town of Southington from July 2020 through June 2021:

Retirements = 22

New Hires = 17

Resignations = 3

A monthly report is provided for the school district at the first Board of Education meeting of each month.

Additional efforts regarding hiring ensued in August 2020 with a campaign to hire college students for substitute coverage throughout the school district. The number of close-contact and positive COVID cases put the district in the position of not having proper coverage for the classrooms. This campaign boosted the list as we added approximately 25 substitutes.

Concerns relating to the movement of paraeducators forced the department to find a more efficient method of posting these open positions. All openings now fall under three postings. This allows internal and external candidates multiple opportunities for interviewing for open positions. A weekly update is sent to the union membership with current openings.

Postings for new positions are forwarded to all staff (school district) and all department heads (Town) so everyone is aware of openings throughout the Town of Southington.

### **Virtual Recruitment Fairs**

Attended three virtual recruitment fairs on behalf of Southington Public Schools:

1. University of Bridgeport
2. NEAG School of Education
3. Minority Career Fair

### **Guardian Tracking/ACADIS**

The department contracted with Guardian Tracking/ACADIS. This is an effective tool used by the Southington Police Department that provides supervisors and employees with performance management updates throughout the year. The system will be fully implemented during the 2021-2022 fiscal year with all Town of Southington employees. All employees will meet with their department heads to review department goals and expectations. Throughout the year, department heads will use this system as a tool to document positive and supportive feedback for employees. When employees know their work has meaning and their efforts are appreciated, they feel

## Superintendent's Annual Report 2020-2021 – Human Resource Department

motivated. Having conversations throughout the year, along with an end-of-year update, will reinforce the sense of connection to the overall goals of the department and the Town.

### **Training for HR Department**

**Free Speech in the Workplace: Politics, Pandemic, Social Media, and Protests** ~ Discussion included what form of speech is and is not allowed in the workplace and on social media.

**How to Improve the Mental Health of Your Employees** ~ The impact of COVID-19 pandemic affected employees well beyond the initial crisis. This webinar provided employers the opportunity to learn how the workplace can impact employee mental health and how to recognize the signs of mental distress in yourself and share best practices for supporting personal wellbeing.

### **Ongoing Work**

The Human Resource Manager recognizes that all work is ongoing and professional development is essential to continue moving the Town and school district forward. The department will continue to work closely with all department leaders, administrators, and staff to establish and build working relationships and effective communication.

## Superintendent's Annual Report 2020-2021

### **PUPIL PERSONNEL SERVICES**

*Rebecca J. Cavallaro, Director of Pupil Personnel Services*

The leadership team continues to be a collaborative “think tank”, looking at all facets of the school district with a focus on maximizing the efficiency and effectiveness of staffing and services for students and their families.

Areas of focus for the Special Education Department for the 2020-2021 school year were:

#### **Program Development for Inclusive Settings**

The Pupil Personnel Services Leadership Team continued to focus efforts on providing high quality in-district programming for students with more intensive educational needs who might otherwise be outplaced. The department continued to work and refine programming needs through the year based on the growing and changing populations of students within Southington.

Expansion of district programs was an ongoing focus and is summarized as follows:

- **SPACE (Socialization, Play, Academics, Communication, and Engagement):**  
The SPACE program was developed as a self-contained program designed to serve students who have been identified as having autism spectrum disorders. This program was identified as needing to be expanded to accommodate the growing number of students. Plans have been to develop two classrooms to continue to support students requiring these intensive services and interventions.
- **EASE (Educational Adaptive Social Experience):**  
Located at John F. Kennedy Middle School, the EASE program was identified by the leadership team as needing to expand to create increased services for the growing population of learners that require additional structure and support due to their significant developmental delays and challenges.
- **STELLAR (Southington Transition and Education in Life-Learning Adult Responsibilities):**  
Located at 51 North Main Street, the STELLAR program is the district's community-based transitional program designed for students with various developmental disabilities. This year the program has continued to grow and expand within the community to support the needs of more than 20 students.
- **CLP (Collaborative Learning Program):**  
The CLP program has undergone revamping in programming and staffing thanks to the efforts of the Pupil Personnel Services Leadership Team. This program provides school-based clinical intervention services to Southington High School students at risk of education outplacement. The team has worked to reestablish this program utilizing district clinical staff in favor of a consultative model to support this population of students and continue to build capacity within the program.

## Superintendent's Annual Report 2020-2021 – Pupil Personnel Services

### **Assistive Technology**

The department continued to use an inventory database this school year to track and monitor student devices provided by the district.

### **State and Federal Compliance**

The Special Education Department maintained compliance with the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA) and its implementing regulations and the Connecticut State Statutes and Regulations for Special Education. The Connecticut State Department of Education reports annually on state and district progress on 14 performance indicators in special education. Southington's most recent District Annual Performance Report indicated that Southington was a district classified as "meets requirements". This rating, based upon the indicators, was determined by ongoing data collection, Special Education Data Application Collection (SEDAC) reports, and numerous other state monitoring reports.

### **Community and Parent Partnerships**

Continuing collaboration with parents, community stakeholders, and local/state agencies is essential to ensure that students with disabilities have choices and opportunities in the community and the Southington School District. Those partnerships included the Next Steps Parent Group, Lewis Educational Agricultural Farm (LEAF), Southington Parks and Recreation programs, Emotional Intelligence (EI) presentations for several groups, Community Mental Health Stakeholders Committee, Student Attendance and Truancy Committee, Southington's Town-wide Effort to Promote Success (STEPS), the Southington YMCA, Southington Early Childhood Collaborative, and Southington Youth Services.

### **Special Education Advisory Council**

The Director of Pupil Personnel Services engaged in professional development and learning through monthly meetings with the Farmington Valley Directors as well as the Connecticut Council of Administrators of Special Education (ConnCASE). The updates provided to districts from the state were valuable in providing ongoing support and direction to the department and to Southington Public Schools in special education.

### **School Readiness and Prevention**

The Preschool Program continued to be successful in meeting the needs of the district's youngest learners with the addition of the fifth classroom at Strong Elementary School. The Family Resource Center (FRC) and the partnership with Birth-to-Three agencies continued to provide support and resources for the youngest students and their families.

### **Elementary School Level**

The four in-district classrooms for students with significant emotional/behavioral issues and significant developmental/cognitive concerns continued to be a great asset providing a continuum of services for elementary students.

## Superintendent's Annual Report 2020-2021 – Pupil Personnel Services

### **Middle School Level**

The Reading Academy at John F. Kennedy Middle School continued to be very successful this year, meeting the needs of middle school students with dyslexia. This intense literacy program (scientifically research-based) meets the needs of students who have significant reading disabilities including dyslexia. The Educational Adaptive Social Experience (EASE) program at J. F. Kennedy Middle School and the Therapeutic Educational Alternative Model (TEAM) program at Joseph A. DePaolo Middle School provided structure and resources for students with significant developmental delays and students with significant social-emotional challenges.

### **High School Level**

The Special Education Department continued to plan for professional development regarding the Planning and Placement Team (PPT) process, best practices in creating Individualized Education Programs (IEP), and maximizing resources based upon students' needs.



## Superintendent's Annual Report 2020-2021

### **SOUTHINGTON HIGH SCHOOL**

*Frank M. Pepe, Principal*

#### **Broad Based Enhancements**

Southington High School enjoyed vast audio and visual upgrades to the auditorium. This work prevented the need to subcontract sound and lighting during drama productions and routine use. The stage curtain and lobby ceiling tiles were replaced, rounding out the aesthetic and safety improvements. The weight room, utilized by every sports team as well as every physical education class, began safety renovations including a new slab and flooring. ACHIEVE, a self-contained program for students requiring instruction in adult daily living skills, continued to expand. Space was captured from an adjoining classroom which allowed a more efficient layout and use of both rooms. This work impacted a third room, prompting a reorganization of food preparation stations, bringing the class in line with the true objectives of the course. These upgrades will be enjoyed by thousands of students for years to come.

Because of the pandemic, directional arrows were posted every six feet in every hallway, and one-way stairwells were designated. The controlled flow during passing time ensured the ability to socially distance.

An additional school counselor, housed in the Student Support Center, was hired to support the 194 students enrolled in the Agricultural and Technology Program. Virtual evening programs such as open house, High School 101, College and Career Planning, and elective presentations, surpassed typical participation rates. The virtual format for each evening program proved to be beneficial and favorable to families.

The Southington High School YouTube channel continued to expand. It allowed families to access school functions that they were unable to attend in person. These videos included graduation, scholarship and awards night, multiple music performances, art show, Project Lead the Way Senior Knight Showcase, virtual course fair, and multiple episodes of a student-led podcast *You Can sit With Me*. This alternate viewing option was also heavily used for sports contests since the live capacity was limited.

Increased technology created easier access building-wide. The wireless was bolstered throughout the building and on Fontana Field. Distance learning created a scenario in which staff members refined a strong presence using either *Google Classroom* or *Canvas*. A one-to-one device was deployed to each student, enhancing learning experiences and opportunities.

#### **Celebrations**

Social studies teacher Ms. Stacy Ferrett was recognized as the Southington Teacher of the Year. Stacy's words shared at graduation inspired all in attendance. She continues to serve as an incredibly powerful, positive force within the district. Southington High School is also proud to present Lydia Holbrook, the District Paraeducator of the Year for 2020-2021. Lydia is well known for her compassion and willingness to help any person at any time.

## Superintendent's Annual Report 2020-2021 – Southington High School

The Girls Softball Team captured the state championship led by Coach Davina Hernandez.

### **Ongoing Work**

Every certified staff member focused professional goal setting on the “C” of Collaboration. Even though the pandemic severely interrupted the formal professional development work on the Vision of a Graduate, Capstone, SRBI (Scientific Research-Based Interventions), Equity, and assessment, “collaboration” equated to survival. Staff adopted, learned and mastered online platforms and programs to create a collaborative learning experience between fully remote, partially remote, and fully in-person learners. Staff used this new instructional model through trial and error and relied on each other. Constant, differentiated internal technology support sessions were offered and utilized.

The science department enjoyed a very successful rollout of the new Forensic Science I course and is very excited to open more sections of this class, as well as the new follow-up course Forensic Science II offered to juniors and seniors in the 2021-2022 school year.

The Health and Physical Education Department began curriculum work for all health courses. This is slated to be complete at the end of the summer of 2021 and work on the physical education curriculum will begin in 2021.

## Superintendent's Annual Report 2020-2021

### **KAREN SMITH ACADEMY**

*Jess W. Levin, Director*

#### **Enhancements**

The Karen Smith Academy (KSA) certified staff continued collaborative work to align instruction to the four C's (Critical Thinking, Collaboration, Communication, and Creativity) within Southington's Vision of a Graduate. KSA continues to emphasize these skills across all content areas and in the KSA Transitional Program for juniors and graduating seniors. The counseling department worked in tandem with the Southington Public Schools Transitional Coordinator for the district to find employment opportunities, job site experience, and shadowing for KSA students. It was abundantly successful in its first year, and KSA looks forward to continuing this venture in the 2021-2022 school year. Successful student transition will continue to be some of KSA's most important work.

Teachers successfully implemented the *Canvas Learning Management System* this year to allow for virtual and in-person learning. Hybrid cohorts were created at the start of the school year but eventually evolved into two main cohorts, consisting of entirely virtual students and those who were in-person every day. KSA enrollment was 50 students for the 2020-2021 school year, and students were evenly split between the two cohorts.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, the Southington YMCA remained steadfast in its support of the Karen Smith Academy, providing ongoing team building for students during the school year. Despite their own financial struggles, the YMCA continued to donate memberships to KSA students in good standing.

The Karen Smith Academy is pleased to welcome the addition of a full-time social worker to the KSA staff for the 2021-2022 school year. This will be an invaluable resource for students.

#### **Ongoing Work**

Returning to full in-person learning in the fall will be an adjustment for students and staff, but certainly welcomed by everyone at KSA. The transition program will remain a primary focus, as will the integration of the new social worker into the fabric of the school. An extensive elective reading program and book club will be offered to students to reestablish cohesion and continue the tradition started by Karen Smith five years ago.

#### **Celebrations**

Ten KSA students received their 2021 high school diploma and participated in graduation exercises at Southington High School. It was very special to say the least and KSA commends teachers and students for their perseverance during a difficult time. KSA will be welcoming several new students for the start of the new school year.

The Karen Smith Academy is excited to announce that with the return of the Apple Harvest Festival, KSA will be entering its first official parade float. This is worthy of celebration.

Superintendent's Annual Report 2020-2021  
**JOSEPH A. DEPAOLO MIDDLE SCHOOL**  
*Christopher J. Palmieri, Principal*

**Broad-Based Enhancements**

DePaolo Middle School continued to further technology integration into the curriculum across all subjects. This year, thanks to a districtwide initiative, each student received a Chromebook. Although necessitated by the pandemic, this was a district goal for years. The district also ended last school year by training staff on the use of a new online learning platform, *Canvas*. Teachers shifted from their *Google Classroom* accounts utilized during the closure last year to *Canvas*, which was implemented since the beginning of this academic school year.

Although most of DePaolo Middle School's extracurricular clubs and activities were not able to meet this year, some did so virtually. Of particular note was our Asset Building Classroom Group which met both in-person and virtually. They enhanced our school climate by creating a series of activities to engage students and staff in a fun and safe manner.

**Celebrations**

"Patriot Pride In Practice" was established last year as a new way to recognize students for their positive behavior. Teachers were asked to nominate students for exceeding expectations in numerous areas according to behavioral norms established by our "Patriot Pride." "Staff Shining Stars" was also added last year and continued this year as a way to recognize staff that goes above and beyond in order to assist their professional colleagues.

DePaolo Middle School held several fundraisers and themed events throughout the year. Some of the highlights include Unity Day, which occurred on October 21, 2020. The school community came together to show unity for kindness, acceptance, and inclusion, to send a visible message that no child should ever experience bullying. The annual Pajama Day fundraiser to raise money for Connecticut Children's Medical Center Cancer Unit occurred in December. DePaolo donated over \$1,100 for this event. DePaolo also raised over \$1,300 for Southington's YMCA Camp Sloper at the annual Polar Plunge. We culminated the year by organizing a cereal box collection to assist Southington Community Services during the summer months. As a result of the generosity of the DePaolo community, 505 boxes of cereal were donated.

On March 10, 2021, DePaolo Middle School had the distinct honor of recognizing members of the Connecticut Army National Guard as they were being deployed from their home base located right next door to DePaolo. The entire school community lined the border of the school to cheer on the members as they passed by. Many Southington veterans assisted the school in making this event possible.

DePaolo Middle School recognized 98 eighth-grade students virtually at the annual Awards Night in June. This was an increase of 15 students from last year.

Although DePaolo Middle School was unable to hold traditional music concerts, students were able to prepare video clips highlighting some of the pieces arranged in band and orchestra

## Superintendent's Annual Report 2020-2021 – J. A. DePaolo Middle School

throughout the year. In addition, DePaolo also had a live virtual drama production and live virtual variety show. Finally, in June, together with Kennedy Middle School's Parent/Teacher Organization (PTO), DePaolo's PTO reserved Lake Compounce exclusively for the benefit of Grade 8 students as a celebration of their three years in middle school.

### **Ongoing Work**

Social Justice work continued this year. Two diversity presenters led conversations with all students and staff three times throughout the year. Two members of the Southington Police Department also participated in the last assembly for all students. This work continued in the classrooms as well. For example, one team celebrated Black History Month by studying and reflecting on the youngest inaugural poet, Amanda Gorman, and her work "The Hill We Climb." Students used their voices to create a mini-poster on how they will change the world.

Emotional Intelligence activities were abundant throughout this school year. Aside from implementing RULER strategies (Recognizing, Understanding, Labeling, Expressing, and Regulating emotions) outlined by the Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence, teachers took the initiative to find ways to ensure the emotional well-being of their students. Research has shown that healthy emotional regulation has an impact of less stress, better health, and positive relationships. Two staff members attended Yale's Emotional Intelligence National Conference which was held virtually this year.

A priority for DePaolo Middle School continues to be on Southington's Vision of a Graduate. Prior to the pandemic, staff furthered their work with shifting to create more opportunities to engage in 21st Century Skills for the students. These include Communication, Critical Thinking, Collaboration, and Creativity. Administrative walks were conducted monthly prior to the pandemic in each content area. The focus is to prepare students for the future, whether they pursue education beyond high school or enter the workforce directly after graduation. The plan is to resume this work during the 2021-2022 school year.

## Superintendent's Annual Report 2020-2021

### **JOHN F. KENNEDY MIDDLE SCHOOL**

*Richard Terino, Principal*

#### **Enhancements**

Requirements and recommendations were implemented as COVID-19 mitigation strategies severely hampered the ability to introduce any enhancements at Kennedy Middle School. One positive byproduct of COVID-19 was the district's use of one-to-one student computer devices. This was accompanied by the district's full implementation of the web-based *Canvas Learning Management System*. Lessons were constructed for synchronous and asynchronous learning. While a Smarter Balanced assessment achievement gap between high-needs students and the general population in literacy was eliminated in 2018-2019, the gap in math had continued. Since then, interim assessment benchmarks were delivered in math to enhance progress monitoring and Scientific Research-Based Interventions (SRBI) Tier 2 and Tier 3 delivery with modifications and staff change noted significant success this year. The original SRBI caseload in Grades 6, 7, and 8, respectively, displayed the following positive outcomes: 50% reduction, 45% reduction, and 57% reduction.

Kennedy Middle School offers over 30 extracurricular clubs and activities, but this year found few in operation. It was necessary for any club or activity to be held virtually, and this hindered any new additions. However, two additions did arise, the Kindness Club and the Last Note Standing. The former was devoted to activities to cheer up students and staff throughout the year, while the latter was devoted to gathering lovers of music into virtual socialization with music as the focus. Mr. Paul Vivian and Dr. Rev. Audley Donaldson returned to the school for a fourth consecutive year to conduct three, three-day virtual workshops on diversity awareness, one at the beginning, another in the middle, and one toward the end of the school year. The last presentation was conducted jointly with two members of the Southington Police Department, Assistant Chief William Palmieri, and School Resource Officer Christopher Laporte. These virtual presentations, a mix of video and audience question and answer, perpetuated the series of annual steps taken to address student stereotyping and mean behaviors.

Local community support for enrichment activities, though extremely curtailed, remained a constant this year. In June, together with DePaolo Middle School's PTO (Parent/Teacher Organization), the school's PTO reserved Lake Compounce exclusively for the benefit of the Grade 8 students as a culminating event. They also procured an ice cream truck, driven onto school grounds to gift ice cream choices to each eighth-grade student, along with a commemorative t-shirt.

#### **Celebrations**

Kennedy Middle School annually honors veterans in a variety of ways. In this school year, where school visitation and assemblies were disallowed, the school's efforts were limited to multiple and myriad collections for veterans. In recognition of past efforts, Kennedy Middle School became the recipient of the statewide Veterans Recognition Program Award 2020. On behalf of the

## Superintendent's Annual Report 2020-2021 – J. F. Kennedy Middle School

Commissioner of Education and the Commissioner of the Department of Veterans Affairs, Stephen Armstrong presented a plaque to educators Amy Perry and Patricia Terricciano and

students Will Cumberlidge, Derek Gaszek, Connor Pratt, and Kate Reilly for their extraordinary participation in support of the state's military veterans. While many others at the school contributed time and energy, these six people went beyond the call.

Precluded from concerts, the school jazz band and each grade level band under the supervision of the band director, Timothy Johnson, did record and distribute virtual performances, one in the winter and one in the spring. The school's orchestra, under the direction of conductor Elyse Sloves, also produced a virtual concert as a culmination of their work.

### **Ongoing Work**

The Habits of Work initiative was introduced to staff in 2019-2020, but implementation was suspended due to COVID-19. This manner of recognizing student work as discrete from student report card grades seeks to improve the fidelity with which grades solely reflect achievement of academic standards. Suspension of this initiative continued throughout 2020-2021. The work of preparing staff for implementation might resume in 2021-2022; however, priorities undertaken to recover from the pandemic may further postpone this work.

The work of the Instructional Learning Teams focused on aligning instruction to the four C's within the Vision of a Graduate (collaboration, communication, critical thinking, and creativity) was suspended this year. This review and revision of curriculum, where needed, is expected to resume in 2021-2022. Curriculum review and revision per project-based learning in art, computers, family consumer science, and technology education had begun in earnest in 2019-2020 but was also suspended due to COVID-19. Resumption is scheduled for next year, with curriculum implementation in 2022-2023.

The instructional delivery model of the co-taught classroom needs to be adaptable to the needs of students; planning time between co-teachers is essential to effect daily differentiated instruction. Professional development time allotment shall be prioritized to afford collaboration between co-teachers.

## Superintendent's Annual Report 2020-2021

### **REMOTE LEARNING ACADEMY**

*Kelly Nichols, Principal*

#### **Introduction**

The Remote Learning Academy was established for the 2020-2021 school year to provide a positive and comprehensive learning experience for district K-5 students and families who chose the remote learning option. Twenty-one teachers navigated the challenges of fully remote teaching and learning to support the growth of students academically, socially, and emotionally. The school day was structured with a balance of synchronous and asynchronous instruction of curriculum using platforms such as *Google Classroom*, *Google Meet*, *Pear Deck*, *Padlet*, *Jamboard*, and *Flipgrid*. Teachers and staff received training to build their capacity in grade-level curriculum and technology. The expectations and schedules for remote learning were shared with families at a virtual open house in September. In this remote model, family support was vital in helping to make a successful learning experience for all students. The dedication of the remote classroom teachers and the quality of the teaching and learning that occurred each day in the remote classrooms was remarkable.

Students were provided with district Chromebooks and hot spots as needed to access their virtual classrooms. Dates were scheduled throughout the school year for students to pick up school supplies, math books and manipulatives, writing paper, and books for independent reading.

Emotional Intelligence (EI) was a focus this school year. A lead EI team of remote teachers was put in place to provide training for new teachers and staff as the RULER (Recognizing, Understanding, Labeling, Expressing, and Regulating emotions) approach was integrated into the remote classrooms. Students and teachers created classroom Charters, and morning and closing meetings were opportunities for students to check in on the Mood Meter. Students were given strategies to regulate their emotions throughout the day, as well as opportunities for socialization in virtual breakout rooms.

Weekly announcements from the principal and student council leaders were shared with all classrooms during morning meeting time. The principal connected with students in this format, sharing highlights for the week and expectations for synchronous and asynchronous learning. Students were invited to share jokes that the principal recorded in the weekly *Flipgrid* message. Student leaders created engaging videos about upcoming spirit days and whole school celebrations.

A weekly newsletter from the principal was emailed to all remote families on Sunday evenings to keep them informed about upcoming events and activities. The newsletter also shared student work, highlights from the classrooms, and Friday phone call winners for the week. A weekly staff newsletter was emailed by the principal on Friday afternoons. This provided remote teachers and staff with updates on curriculum, Emotional Intelligence, events and activities, and good news.

#### **Celebrations**

A goal for the Remote Learning Academy was to build a positive schoolwide sense of community within the remote setting. The first step was to provide equitable experiences for students, families,



## Superintendent's Annual Report 2020-2021 – Remote Learning Academy

and teachers. This was accomplished by having K-5 students select the unicorn as the school mascot through a voting process. Students were then able to submit a drawing of the mascot that would ultimately be chosen to represent the Remote Learning Academy. This mascot could be found on the school newsletter and spirit wear.

A student council leadership opportunity was created for students in fourth and fifth grade. The selection process required students to write an essay about why they believe they should be selected for this leadership role. Thirteen students were selected as student council leaders. The student leaders met weekly with the principal and teacher advisors to provide feedback about remote learning, plan celebrations, spirit days, and community service opportunities. Examples of whole school celebrations were World Kindness Day, Give Thanks Day, Valentine's Day, teacher appreciation poetry sharing, and National Road Trip Day. A multi-day Bread for Life food drive was sponsored by the student council in November.

“Fabulous Friday” phone calls were a weekly highlight for students and families. Every Friday, the principal celebrated students who demonstrated good work ethic, class participation, and engagement. The principal joined the virtual classrooms and called the parents announcing their child had won the “Fabulous Friday” phone call and why they were being recognized. The phone calls began in January and continued through June. They rotated between Grades K-2 and Grades 3-5 weekly. Over 220 phone calls were made.

“Good News” postcards were another weekly highlight for students and families. Every week the principal, with input from classroom teachers, would recognize a student from each classroom for showing improvement. The students received a postcard in the mail signed by the principal with details of their accomplishments. More than 440 postcards were mailed to students.

Teacher appreciation week provided an opportunity for students and families to celebrate remote teachers and staff. The school community came together for a celebratory reverse car parade. This was the first opportunity since the beginning of the year meet and greet/materials pick-up that students, families, and teachers were able to see each other in person.

### **Kindergarten**

In an effort to build student capacity in technology and academics, kindergarten began with three teachers each having a morning and afternoon class. In February, each kindergarten teacher joined their AM and PM classes together to create one full kindergarten class. Evening informational sessions were provided for families prior to the transition. Ultimately, this change provided more opportunities for students to receive differentiated instruction and grow as readers, writers, and mathematicians. It also gave students the opportunity to meet new friends and continue to develop their social and emotional skills.

The kindergarten teachers collaborated with the literacy coaches to implement Reader's and Writer's Workshop with fidelity. Students learned about letters, sounds, and words through the phonics and word study programs that were integrated into the synchronous lessons. The *i-Ready Mathematics* program including *i-Ready Diagnostic* was implemented with a mini-lesson followed

## Superintendent's Annual Report 2020-2021 – Remote Learning Academy

by small group and individual instruction. Students were selected for intervention in Kindergarten Academy to practice and reinforce kindergarten reading readiness skills such as letter/sound identification, phonological awareness, and reading and writing.

From September through December, the science and social studies curriculum was presented through asynchronous lessons. Realizing the importance of live lessons in these content areas, a change toward weekly synchronous science lessons was made in January. At this time, the social studies curriculum was integrated into the kindergarten literacy lessons.

Emotional Intelligence was a key component of the synchronous instructional day. Students and teachers created classroom charters to build strong classroom communities. Students and families were introduced to the Mood Meter, with copies sent home. Daily morning meetings served as a time for students to develop peer relationships, engage in EI lessons and Mood Meter check-ins. Activities that encouraged student communication were created and shared with families to foster a school-home connection. Students have demonstrated growth since the beginning of the school year in awareness and sensitivity to both their peers and their own social-emotional needs. Daily interactive read-alouds of literature were incorporated to reflect the backgrounds and experiences of a diverse student population. With the support of a parent/teacher committee, kindergarten students celebrated their accomplishments as remote learners with an in-person graduation celebration in June.

### **Grade 1**

Four remote teachers provided synchronous and asynchronous instruction for first-grade students. Teachers collaborated with literacy coaches to create engaging lessons in Reader's and Writer's Workshop that would improve students' literacy skills. Support staff provided reading interventions for students as needed. Opportunities for student partnerships and conversations about learning were created using break-out rooms. The *i-Ready Mathematics* program and *i-Ready Diagnostic* were used for whole class, small group, and individual instruction. At the beginning of the year, the science and social studies curriculum was taught through asynchronous lessons. In January, an additional thirty minutes was added to the weekly schedule for a rotation of asynchronous science or social studies lessons. This gave teachers time to reinforce, reteach, and extend as necessary in these content areas. Teachers were also able to assess students' understanding of concepts and answer questions about the content that students may not have understood during the asynchronous lesson.

Emotional Intelligence using the RULER approach was integrated throughout the synchronous school day. Morning meetings, lunch bunch days, and recess break-out rooms were integral in building classroom communities. Diversity was celebrated throughout the year through grand conversations, mentor texts, and videos. Parents were invited to share their different customs and celebrations with their child's class. Students learned to say hello and goodbye in different languages spoken by the students. Through newsletters, emails, videos, and verbal communication, parents were empowered to take an active role in their child's remote learning. They were given tools to assist their child with social, emotional, and academic learning as needed. A virtual field

## Superintendent's Annual Report 2020-2021 – Remote Learning Academy

trip to Roger Williams Virtual Zoomobile taught students about animal adaptations. First-grade students and staff celebrated their accomplishments as remote learners with an in-person gathering in June.

### **Grade 2**

The year began with four remote second-grade teachers providing synchronous and asynchronous instruction. In April, one of the teachers returned to in-person teaching due to a reduction in the remote class size. Teachers collaborated with literacy coaches to create engaging lessons in Reader's and Writer's Workshop as well as phonics to continue to improve students' literacy skills. Students had a variety of writing celebrations where they shared their writing with their peers in break-out rooms or on *Padlet*. The *i-Ready Mathematics* program and *i-Ready Diagnostic* were used for whole class, small group, and individual instruction. The science and social studies curriculum moved from asynchronous lessons in September to a combination of synchronous and asynchronous teaching and learning in January. This gave teachers time to assess students' understanding of concepts and students the opportunity to ask questions about the content that they may not have understood during the asynchronous time.

Emotional Intelligence was integrated throughout the instructional day with strategies for students to regulate their emotions using Meta-Moments, being their “best self,” and mini-meditations. Classroom charters were created by teachers and students. Morning meetings provided students with opportunities for leadership roles and reinforced the classroom community. Lunch bunches were essential in helping students connect and reinforce socialization skills. At least two EI lessons/activities were incorporated into the weekly schedule. These lessons included read-alouds on self-esteem to encourage students to believe in themselves. Students and teachers participated in a virtual field trip to Mystic Aquarium. Second-grade students, families, and staff celebrated their accomplishments as remote learners with an in-person gathering in June.

### **Grade 3**

The year began with four remote third-grade teachers providing synchronous and asynchronous instruction. This was reduced to three classrooms in March. Book clubs about characters, research, and biographies were a focus. Students shared their thoughts about their books with club members in formats such as *Padlet*. Families were invited to writing celebrations throughout the year where students shared their animal research guides, poetry, and informative writing pieces. Third and fourth-grade classes came together in virtual break-out rooms with third-grade students sharing their literary essays with peers about the mentor text *Each Kindness* by Jacqueline Woodson. The *i-Ready Mathematics* program was used for whole-class instruction. The *Pear Deck* application provided students with a platform to problem solve independently while giving their teachers a real-time visual insight of their work and understanding of concepts. The science and social studies curriculum moved from asynchronous lessons in September to a combination of synchronous and asynchronous teaching and learning in January.

Emotional Intelligence was integrated into the instructional week. Classroom charters were created with students and teachers. Each day began with a morning meeting and ended with a closing

## Superintendent's Annual Report 2020-2021 – Remote Learning Academy

meeting. These times allowed teachers to facilitate emotional learning. Classrooms offered opportunities for students to participate in EI lessons, meditation, and reasons to be thankful conversations. Emotional toolboxes were developed with students and shared with parents. The toolboxes provided students with the RULER approach tools such as Meta-Moment to move from one quadrant to another on the Mood Meter. Students learned how to be their “best self.” Third-grade students participated in a virtual diversity workshop led by Mr. Paul Vivian and Rev. Dr. Audley Donaldson. Students and teachers participated in a virtual field trip to the Connecticut State Capitol. Third-grade students, families, and staff came together for an in-person celebration in June.

### **Grade 4**

Three remote teachers provided synchronous and asynchronous instruction for fourth-grade students. The teachers implemented the Lucy Calkins *Units of Study* for Reader's and Writer's Workshop. Book clubs enabled fourth-grade students to have rich conversations about a common text. Virtual break-out rooms were used as a space for students to express their thoughts about historical fiction, the American Revolution, and their perspective on different characters. *Number the Stars* by Lois Lowry was a read-aloud for all grade four students. Third and fourth-grade classes came together, with fourth-grade students sharing their compare/contrast literary essays with grade three peers and reflecting on how their writing has grown since third grade. The *i-Ready Mathematics* program was used for whole-class instruction. The *Pear Deck* application provided students with a platform to problem solve independently while giving their teachers a real-time visual insight of their work and understanding of concepts. The science and social studies curriculum moved from asynchronous lessons in September to a combination of synchronous and asynchronous teaching and learning in January. This gave teachers time to assess students' understanding of concepts and students the opportunity to ask questions about the content.

Emotional Intelligence was integrated throughout the instructional day. Each day began with a morning meeting with a review of the classroom charter and a themed greet and share. This time provided students with an opportunity to develop relationships with their peers and build a classroom community. Students were recognized with “nice” tickets for positive behaviors. The tickets could be used in a reward raffle every Friday, with many students selecting lunch bunch with friends as a reward. Throughout the day, students checked in using their Mood Meter cards, honoring each other's feelings and offering ways to help. As a grade level, Emotional Intelligence/kindness lessons were used, and resources were provided to students to help regulate emotions. Diversity was celebrated with Black History Month, Women's History Month, and various cultures.

Fourth graders participated in a virtual STEPS (Southington's Town-Wide Effort to Promote Success)/D.A.R.E. (Drug Abuse Resistance Education) presentation led by STEPS Youth Prevention Coordinator, Megan Albanese, and Crime Prevention Officer, Chris LaPorte of the Southington Police Department. Students and teachers participated in a virtual field trip to the West Hartford Children's Museum. This was a 45-minute presentation with a program educator who presented a variety of animals with time to answer questions. Fourth-grade students, families,

## Superintendent's Annual Report 2020-2021 – Remote Learning Academy

and staff gathered for an in-person celebration with outdoor activities in June.

### **Grade 5**

Synchronous and asynchronous instruction for fifth-grade remote learners was led by three teachers. Grade five students grew as readers and writers using the Lucy Calkins *Units of Study* in Reader's and Writer's Workshop. Book clubs proved beneficial for student analysis of themes and deeper thinking about character traits, setting, power, and problems. Genres of focus in reading were narrative non-fiction, fantasy, and historical fiction. Literary essays, fantasy narratives, and research-based argument essays were explored in writing. Students learned to suspend judgment and collect evidence for both sides of an argument in their argument writing. The *i-Ready Mathematics* program was used for whole-class instruction. The *Pear Deck* application provided students with a platform to problem solve independently while giving their teachers a real-time visual insight of their work and understanding of concepts. Science and social studies lessons were presented through asynchronous lessons from September through December. In January, an additional thirty minutes was added to the weekly schedule for a rotation of asynchronous science or social studies lessons. Students created inventions for the Invention Convention.

Emotional Intelligence was integrated throughout the instructional day. Classroom charters were developed, as were multiple opportunities for students to check in on the Mood Meter. Strategy walls were created to provide guidance for students as they identified and regulated their emotions. Students used digital journals to document their feelings. Students also identified their “best self” and set personal goals to achieve this “best self.” An “acts of kindness” *Padlet* served as a place for students to post or share an observation of kindness or their own kind act. Fifth grade merged their social-emotional learning with the academic curriculum when possible. *Pear Deck* in math offered students the opportunity to check in with three feeling choices daily. Students used EI language when investigating characters in narrative stories both written and read. Students were able to discuss the social and emotional dynamics of the characters in their book club texts, in self-regulated break-out rooms. These book clubs had their own student-created charters and expectations.

Mr. Paul Vivian and Rev. Dr. Audley Donaldson led diversity workshops for fifth-grade students on three separate occasions this year to further student understanding of equity, inclusion, and social justice. Fifth graders participated in a virtual STEPS/DARE presentation led by STEPS Youth Prevention Coordinator, Megan Albanese, and Crime Prevention Officer, Chris LaPorte of the Southington Police Department. Students and teachers participated in a virtual field trip to the Plimoth Patuxet Museum. This one-hour program provided students with an opportunity to understand the connection the Wampanoag and other Native People have to Mother Earth, their seasonal way of life, and their respect for all living beings. With the support of a parent/teacher committee, fifth-grade students celebrated with an in-person recognition ceremony in June.

## Superintendent's Annual Report 2020-2021

### **WALTER A. DERYNOSKI ELEMENTARY SCHOOL**

*Jan Verderame, Principal*

#### **School Accomplishments**

The 2020-2021 school year at Walter A. Derynoski Elementary School was filled with learning and building positive connections. Although there were many uncertainties due to COVID-19, the teachers and staff continued to focus on best practices in instruction. Except for some individual classes, Derynoski was able to have in-person learning all year. A schedule and safety protocols were put in place following the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidelines, and were reviewed with parents and staff at the beginning of the school year. With this detailed protocol, there was little room for adjustments. Parents and staff were updated throughout the year of any changes in the safety requirements. Students were provided mask breaks throughout the day and teachers adjusted their learning schedules to maintain a positive classroom environment.

Curriculum was followed in all academic areas. Both Reader's and Writer's Workshop were implemented with fidelity. Following analysis of formative assessments, teachers provided explicit instruction targeting individual student needs through one-on-one or small group work. Workshop models and inquiry-based learning were aligned with the Common Core State Standards and the four C's (Critical Thinking, Collaboration, Communication, and Creativity) which enhanced learning.

Derynoski staff increased their capacity in the area of social-emotional learning using the RULER approach (Recognizing, Understanding, Labeling, Expressing, and Regulating emotions) from the Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence. Three staff members completed a six-week training program at the RULER Institute online, and two staff members attended a two-day workshop. These staff members shared their newly acquired knowledge of social-emotional learning with coworkers. During the virtual open house in September, parents were provided an outline of the program. Parents were also kept informed of Emotional Intelligence practices through the principal's weekly update. To establish positive classroom communities, individual classroom Charters were developed by students. Lessons were implemented for all components of the RULER program. These lessons provided students with the skills to recognize, understand, label, express, and regulate emotions. Staff, students, and families will continue the aforementioned RULER practice next year, along with incorporating a "cozy corner" in each classroom to provide a more hands-on strategy to support students' emotional well-being.

Distance learning for students that needed to stream into the classroom was initially challenging for teachers. The level of staff and student capacity of technology improved as the year progressed, which facilitated a smoother integration of remote learning when needed. Consistent support was provided by both Central Office staff and colleagues. The teamwork noted during distance learning continued to be remarkable.

Safety was the primary focus this year due to COVID-19. Through a strong partnership with Central Office and the Department of Health, many questions that administration, staff, parents, and children had were answered. As seen in the community, the ever changing protocols were

## Superintendent's Annual Report 2020-2021 – Derynoski Elementary School

challenging, and many times made it difficult to plan events and activities. The School Safety Plan was updated and reviewed with team members and staff. First responders were present at both fire and lockdown drills to provide feedback.

The PTO (Parent/Teacher Organization) was instrumental in securing materials to support learning and building a school community. This year the PTO ran a successful Read-A-Thon to support classroom libraries and other important materials for the school. They also provided two water bottle filling stations for the building. The PTO continues to be active stakeholders of the Derynoski community.

### **Celebrations/Diversity**

Derynoski Elementary School values its community. In a typical year, the school would welcome visitors into the building to share their gifts with students at all grade levels. Unfortunately, due to COVID-19, this did not occur. The plan is to integrate the community again into the school with a veteran's and guest reader program. The students did, however, spearhead many fundraisers for local agencies. To support a focus on cultural awareness, two workshops on diversity were given by Mr. Paul Vivian and Rev. Dr. Audley Donaldson for third and fifth-grade students. These workshops provided students with practical experiences to examine diversity in everyday life. Creating a diverse classroom and school library for student growth and understanding was a priority. The Character Counts/STEPS (Southington's Town-wide Effort to Promote Success) program continued this year to promote pillars of character and asset building to support inclusion and kindness for all.

### **Kindergarten**

The kindergarten team integrated a new phonics program. The Lucy Calkins *Units of Study in Phonics* was integrated with limited coaching due to the specialist's assignment to other positions. The kindergarten staff collaborated to ensure success in the word study program adding resources where needed. In the area of math, the continuation of the *i-Ready Mathematics* program was implemented with fidelity. The *i-Ready Mathematics* program created a rich classroom environment in which students at all levels became active and real-world problem solvers. Through teacher-led instruction, students developed mathematical reasoning, engaged in discourse, and built strong mathematical habits. Math groups were integrated to support differentiation.

Implementation of whole school celebrations highlighted good character and positive behavior. Teachers emphasized being respectful, using manners, and always choosing kindness. The team also focused on social-emotional learning through a variety of social skills lessons and the RULER program. All components of the RULER program were implemented to support student understanding of emotions. A separate program targeted a variety of common social skills, and students were able to grow and develop by listening and acting out several of the social stories.

### **Grade 1**

The first-grade team welcomed two new teachers this year. A target area for the school included building student's Emotional Intelligence. Through the incorporation of the RULER program,

## Superintendent's Annual Report 2020-2021 – Derynoski Elementary School

along with the whole school behavior plan, students learned how to identify and regulate emotions.

A positive classroom environment was developed through the incorporation of a daily morning meeting and classroom Charter. High academic expectations were met using explicit instruction in all content areas. Reader's and Writer's Workshop were implemented daily along with guided reading and strategy groups to increase student achievement. The Math Workshop was limited this year due to safety protocols. Continued use of the *i-Ready* program along with targeted, differentiated small group instruction supported growth in the mathematics area.

### **Grade 2**

The second-grade team implemented Reader's and Writer's Workshop, including the Lucy Calkins *Units of Study in Phonics* program. In the area of writing, the team noted that students required more review than is typical in the early part of the year. Since students did not have in-person learning as of March of the previous year, there was a noted impact in written expression skills. Daily lessons and explicit small group learning supported both reading and writing growth throughout the year. The Math Workshop model was refined this year, with significant time spent differentiating *i-Ready* and using supplemental materials to meet all students' individual needs. A focus on all components of the RULER program was made this year in the school. Students and teachers developed a Charter together to build the classroom community within the first few weeks. All other components of the RULER program, including the Mood Meter, Strategy Wall, and Meta-Moment, were integrated through focused lessons and generalized into daily situations. This continues to be an area of focus for the next school year.

### **Grade 3**

The third-grade team had a year of changes and uncertainty but had much to be proud of. Despite changes in instructional practices due to COVID-19, classrooms continued their work on incorporating best practices and facilitating/modeling the four C's needed for 21st Century learners. The school focus on Emotional Intelligence was completed through the integration of the RULER program. Each classroom began this process by putting together a collaborative class Charter. The other components of the program, such as the Mood Meter, Strategy Wall, and Meta-Moment, were shared with students to help them identify and regulate their feelings and emotions throughout the day.

In language arts, explicit, daily instruction was provided in grammatical concept using the *Patterns of Power* text. Learning progressions in both Reader's and Writer's Workshop drove instruction and provided a framework to support students in achieving their personal goals. In mathematics, there was some changes in the workshop structure due to COVID-19. Differentiation was incorporated through explicit instruction with the teacher. Students were able to talk out their thinking with a partner.

STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) investigations were integrated using the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS). Students had the opportunity to create, communicate, collaborate, and think critically about matter, invisible forces, and heredity. Staff



## Superintendent's Annual Report 2020-2021 – Derynoski Elementary School

communication with families was very important this year since parents were not in the building. This was completed both during and beyond school hours to keep the home-school connection strong.

### **Grade 4**

This year the fourth-grade team continued to work to further their skills in language arts using the Reader's and Writer's Workshop model. The team integrated their previous training on the benefits of teacher tool kits and how to incorporate the bands of text complexity into their work. In addition, the teachers continued to utilize the narrative and informational reading learning progressions, as well as the self-assessment rubrics for students to set individualized reading and writing goals to track their growth. In writing, the team focused on narrative, opinion, and informative writing. The team integrated the scoring rubrics into instructional practice to facilitate self-monitoring of progress and development of individual goals. In addition, *Patterns of Power* lessons were incorporated in grammar to support students' editing and revising skills. In mathematics, the staff implemented a modified Math Workshop model. Small group instruction was provided to support differentiation. As with each year, student behavior was supported through the STEPS and whole school positive behavior program, where students were rewarded with monthly celebrations. To support students' emotional learning the RULER program was implemented, incorporating the Mood Meter, classroom Charter, Strategy Wall, and Meta-Moment.

### **Grade 5**

Fifth-grade students read and analyzed historical fiction, narrative, and fantasy texts. Identification of themes, main idea, and cause and effect were some of the target learning strategies for these genres. Integration of the learning progressions and opportunities for self-assessment facilitated student ownership of learning. In the area of writing, narrative, fantasy, research, opinion, and memoirs were some of the subjects of focus. In the area of math, decimals, measurement, geometry, and division were some of the units addressed through the *i-Ready Mathematics* program. Differentiation in this area was completed through individual and group instruction. Students were encouraged to work with a partner to discuss their thinking.

Students enjoyed continued inquiry-based science lessons aligning with the Next Generation Science Standards model. Students developed their inventions for the Invention Convention. Social studies targeted American history through the Revolutionary War. The developmental asset building blocks of the STEPS program could be seen throughout classrooms. The RULER program was implemented with fidelity and enhanced the STEPS program. The teachers integrated the language of the program during all parts of the day to ensure generalization.

### **Ongoing Work & School Improvement**

Derynoski's work next year will be multi-faceted. Since there was a limited SRBI (Scientific Research-Based Interventions) program this year, this will be a priority for the next school year. A systematic program will be developed starting in September to target Tier 2 and Tier 3 students' needs. The practice of generalizing the four C's into content areas will be a focus for certified staff. This will be addressed by the coordinators, specialists, and administration.

## Superintendent's Annual Report 2020-2021 – Derynoski Elementary School

The Derynoski School Improvement Team will focus on best practices in instruction to increase student achievement. The team will analyze fall data and collaborate with grade level teams to determine an instructional learning target.

## Superintendent's Annual Report 2020-2021

### **FLANDERS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL**

*Katie T. Guerrette, Principal*

#### **School Accomplishments**

While this school year had many challenges due to COVID-19 regulations, Flanders Elementary School proudly provided consistency and community for the students and staff. Flanders School is part of a diverse neighborhood with a strong connection to its families and the greater Southington community. Flanders continued to connect with residents by supporting a variety of organizations, including Bread for Life with the annual Souper Bowl Food Drive, Connecticut Children's Foundation with Pajama Day, and YMCA Camp Sloper through the Sloper Plunge. In addition, Flanders held two very successful fundraisers for two kindergarten students who were significantly impacted by medical diagnoses this year.

Flanders also held the school's 16th Annual Veterans Day ceremony celebrating all who served through a video production of the virtual ceremony shared with the community. Emotional Intelligence and social-emotional lessons were a daily priority using the RULER approach (Recognizing, Understanding, Labeling, Expressing, and Regulating emotions). Students practiced using the Mood Meter regularly, created classroom Charters, and learned to utilize the Meta-Moment. Emotional Intelligence work in conjunction with Responsive Classroom and Southington's Town-wide Effort to Promote Success (STEPS) provided the school with a greater sense of community, collaboration, emotional recognition, regulation, and empathy. The greatest accomplishment of the year was maintaining safe in-person learning for students for the entire academic year. Flanders takes great pride in the strong sense of a caring community, fostering academic and social-emotional excellence and achievement.

#### **Celebrations**

Flanders School held the Fourth Annual One School, One Book with the whole community reading *Charlotte's Web* by E. B. White. This shared literacy experience was a wonderful way to build the home-school connection and promote family literacy. Throughout the event, families were assigned chapters to read and trivia questions were posed at school. Students were entered into weekly raffles for a chance to win books and a grand prize stuffed animal, Wilbur the pig. At the end of the literacy event, a schoolwide celebration ensued with an interactive and informative visit from Farmer Mark of Southington's Lewis Educational Agriculture Farm (LEAF). Farmer Mark introduced the students to live farm animals including chickens, guinea pigs, rabbits, and a very special guest, a six-week-old pig.

The Flanders PTO (Parent/Teacher Organization) continued to support the school and make Flanders a wonderful place for students and staff. The PTO generously sponsored two virtual cultural arts programs this year including Mr. Karim Nagi, who brought the school on an Arabiqa excursion, teaching the students about music, dance, and the Arabic language, as well as Mr. Iddi Saaka, who brought an exciting Soro-Bindi performance to the students including traditional Ghanaian dances, songs, and stories.

## Superintendent's Annual Report 2020-2021 – Flanders Elementary School

### **Kindergarten**

It was a stellar year in kindergarten. Students learned about letters and words through the new phonics units guided by the mascot, Mabel the elephant, and became super readers. Students learned to navigate relationships and solve conflicts with their peers throughout the day and learned to use the Mood Meter to plot their feelings daily.

### **Grade 1**

First-grade students had a great year of growth. First graders became word detectives in reading and phonics. Students built an understanding of place value and learned various addition and subtraction strategies with the new math curriculum. Students had many discussions about emotions and feelings through read-alouds and the Mood Meter. The first graders also led the school through Kindness Week with good deeds, inspirational posters, and leading by example.

### **Grade 2**

Second grade had an exciting year. Writing brought many new opportunities for second graders to write for a variety of purposes and audiences. Students became experts on reading fluency and comprehension strategies. Math focused on adding and subtracting three-digit numbers and measurement. Second graders enjoyed many STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) activities, from building Lego creations to creating grass heads. Second graders even became proficient at using the Mood Meter daily.

### **Grade 3**

Third graders enjoyed becoming more independent learners. Students enjoyed math centers as well as becoming fluent with math facts in all four operations. The exploration-based science units allowed students to become research scientists. Students learned to build a life of reading, appreciating both fiction and non-fiction genres. Intelligence was evident in the classroom as students sparked many discussions about feelings through read-alouds and the Mood Meter.

### **Grade 4**

Fourth-grade students had a wonderful year of school. Students had a chance to push their thinking and take part in hands-on science experiments with the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) units. Through Writer's Workshop, students wrote for a variety of purposes in multiple genres. In Reader's Workshop, students focused on characters and their traits, took part in book clubs, and read historical fiction. In math, students became more comfortable using technology with *i-Ready*. Through social-emotional learning lessons, students learned to express themselves with strong emotional vocabulary using the RULER approach and *Second Step* lessons. Students were able to effectively plot themselves on the Mood Meter and take Meta-Moments as needed.

### **Grade 5**

Fifth-grade students had a busy year of new learning. Fifth graders participated in European explorer boat races, hands-on activities based on the NGSS principles, daily math with real-life application, Reader's and Writer's workshops, and most importantly, daily lessons and class meetings around Emotional Intelligence. Fifth graders discussed current events and feelings

## Superintendent's Annual Report 2020-2021 – Flanders Elementary School

surrounding the events, built strong relationships in their classrooms, and utilized strategies for dealing with daily stress such as yoga and meditation.

### **Ongoing Work and School Improvement**

Flanders Elementary School will continue to use data-driven decision making when planning for the instructional needs of all learners. Flanders will utilize a continuous growth model throughout the ongoing work with Emotional Intelligence to foster a positive school climate for all. Flanders continues to focus on fostering a safe, respectful, and consistently positive community for learning, valuing kindness and hard work.

## Superintendent's Annual Report 2020-2021

### **WILLIAM H. HATTON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL**

*Robert Garry, Principal*

#### **Accomplishments**

William H. Hatton Elementary School continued a strong commitment to excellence in teaching and learning. With a robust set of mitigation strategies in place, Hatton School was able to maintain a safe and successful in-person learning model throughout the year. One of the core strengths of Hatton is the relationship developed with families. This partnership between teachers, students, and families ensured that students remained engaged in classroom and remote learning opportunities. Every Hatton staff member has benefited from Emotional Intelligence professional learning experiences. Strategies ranging from morning meetings and classroom charters to frequent check-ins on mood meters helped both students and staff better manage their emotional well-being.

The PTO (Parent/Teacher Organization) remains dedicated to supporting the entire school community through enrichment activities, cultural arts programs, and a variety of family events. Virtual books fairs in the fall and spring, as well as a fitness fundraiser, allowed the PTO to purchase stencils to enhance the playground and add a sensory pathway inside the building. Families were also engaged in virtual evening events where they cooked pizza with the principal and learned to make cookies with a local baker. Connecting with families remains a priority for Hatton School.

The Hatton staff maintains a focus on total involvement and continuous improvement. All teachers are members of one or more teams that focus on school improvement, data analysis, SRBI (Scientific Research-Based Intervention), STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics), Emotional Intelligence, and diversity and equity. Staff efforts continue to have a positive impact on school culture and proactive decision-making. In addition to teacher leadership, Hatton students are engaged in leadership development opportunities through our STEPS (Southington's Town-wide Effort to Promote Success) team, leadership assemblies, and participation with the Connecticut Association of Schools leadership conferences.

#### **Celebrations**

A highlight of this school year was the addition of another district program at Hatton to support students with unique learning needs. The SPACE (Socialization, Play, Academics, Communication, and Engagement) program focuses on younger students with developmental delays in an environment specially designed to meet their needs. This program, along with LAUNCH (Language, Autism Support, Unique Programming, Nurturing Environment, Community Building, High Expectations) and LIDS (Learn, Improve, Develop Skills), ensures that all learners can succeed at Hatton and that all students are successfully integrated into the learning community. The Unified Sports program continues to grow as physical education and special education case managers collaborate to support the athletes and their peers.

The Hatton "Friday Phone Call" was once again a highlight for students and families. This weekly phone call to families by the school principal occurs right in the classroom and celebrates the

## Superintendent's Annual Report 2020-2021 – Hatton Elementary School

success of an individual student. It serves as a great motivator for the students and is a meaningful way to recognize and reinforce positive contributions to the school community. Over 700 calls were made this year, to the delight of Hatton families. A book vending machine was added to the media center and each Friday phone call recipient receives a gold coin to purchase their own book as an additional incentive and recognition of their efforts.

### **Preschool**

This was a successful year for the preschool. Two classes remained at Hatton, and three sections moved to another elementary school in the district. This decreased class size and provided more opportunities to individualize instruction to meet students' needs. The preschool team began using newly revised report cards more closely aligned to the Common Core State Standards, allowing for specific and informative progress reports for each age level. Preschool also began using the *Bridges Math* program with the three-year-old classes. This aligned closely with the state standards, provided instruction in number recognition, number to set, subitizing, as well as some early addition instruction. Throughout the year, teachers and staff were able to use technology to include any students who were temporarily remote due to COVID-19 issues; however, at no time did the preschool classes need to shift to full remote instruction. All staff focused on maintaining a safe classroom environment by adhering to district mitigation strategies and frequent sanitizing of all toys, manipulatives, and surfaces. Preschool students were able to participate in weekly physical education and music classes and are working to include both art and library in the coming year. The end of the year graduation was done virtually. Each class scheduled its own end-of-year celebration to recognize the efforts of the students and their families in this challenging school year.

### **Kindergarten**

The kindergarten classes successfully adapted to the challenges presented by COVID-19 mitigation strategies. Students began their year visiting each classroom for a short sneak peek, allowing them to meet their teachers and see what their classroom looked like. A virtual open house was recorded and sent to families providing them with a tour of each classroom, as well as a *Google Slides* presentation explaining how a Kindergarten year would look. Students took many virtual fields trips this year to learn about lifecycles. Trips included a butterfly museum, a farm, and the San Diego Zoo. Kindergarteners learned about Emotional Intelligence using the Mood Meter. They were able to identify their own feelings and notice how those feelings changed throughout the day. The kindergarten team used many books and videos to help with this skill. The *SPOT* series helped them adapt to social distancing, wearing masks, and virtual learning. This was also the first year in which all kindergarteners had their own devices, which allowed them to build independence in their computer skills. The year concluded with students participating in "Ben Strong" days to support a fellow peer, pajama days, a beach bash, and a drive-through celebration for families recognizing the students' work and achievements. Each student received an individualized memory yearbook that documented their progress through work examples and photographs.

## Superintendent's Annual Report 2020-2021 – Hatton Elementary School

### **Grade 1**

Despite the challenges of returning to school under COVID-19 restrictions, the first-grade students had a very successful year. Due to quarantining and distance learning, the teachers utilized *Google Classroom* and *Google Meet* to connect with students, conduct lessons, and maintain strong connections with their students and families. The first-grade team began using a new phonics program this year called *Units of Study in Phonics* from Teachers College and Lucy Calkins. Implementation was supported by the literacy coaches virtually. Additionally, virtual lessons from Teachers College were utilized to support English Language Arts (ELA) units. In science, all three classrooms watched mealworms go through metamorphosis. The first-grade classes also incubated and hatched chicken eggs. Students learned all about the development process and got to see how quickly the chicks changed in the two weeks they were in the classroom. The first-grade team resumed the traditional class play, but was unable to hold a performance due to COVID-19 restrictions. Students recorded songs and lines from the play and created a video to share with families.

### **Grade 2**

This year the second-grade team, like all other grade levels, had the unique challenge of welcoming students back to in-person learning. Teachers worked to develop a classroom community where students felt safe, but also focused on reacquainting them to the rigors of in-person learning. Emotional Intelligence strategies were a regular feature of daily routines. Students were encouraged to identify their feelings throughout the year to assist with any stressors they may encounter during their day. Teachers and students worked together to develop a classroom Charter, read books about emotions, and create posters to describe what they were thankful for in their lives. Teachers closely monitored student progress to attend to learning gaps brought on by distance learning. In math, teachers emphasized place value and adding and subtracting larger numbers. In reading, teachers focused efforts on word solving strategies and gaining a deeper understanding of characters. The second-grade classes enjoyed participating in the school's *Apex* fundraising event. The culmination of the fundraiser was an outdoor dance party that the whole grade level participated in together. Second-grade students also enjoyed making apple turkeys at Thanksgiving, writing their own Mother's Day books, and working on class memory books to celebrate their efforts throughout the year.

### **Grade 3**

Third-grade students created maps of Connecticut to show the variety of skills associated with geography. They also learned about Connecticut's government, economy, and famous citizens. In science, students worked on inquiry-based units covering the topics of matter, forces, and heredity. Classes also worked to improve narrative and informational writing skills, as well as learning how to craft an effective opinion piece. In math, the students increased their understanding of basic computation and tackled new concepts like multiplication, division, basic algebra, area, perimeter, and measurement. Finally, in reading the students worked to improve their responses to various texts in all areas. Teachers worked to incorporate close reads to boost comprehension skills. Throughout the school year, third-grade students were able to adapt to the demands of a mixture of in-person learning and distance learning. Students were successful using their digital tools and



## Superintendent's Annual Report 2020-2021 – Hatton Elementary School

showed flexibility, adaptivity, and perseverance during this challenging school year.

### **Grade 4**

Fourth-grade students and teachers enjoyed a successful school year. Students dissected owl pellets as a culminating activity for their animal adaptations and food webs unit in science. Students read and researched multiple texts and published their own nonfiction books. The books included text features and highlighted informational essay writing. Fourth-grade classes focused on lessons in Emotional Intelligence trying to match words to feelings. In math, centers were used to enhance student engagement. Students also focused on setting goals related to growth mindset and maintaining positive thinking through various books and activities throughout the year. Students and teachers practiced using various technology platforms to enhance learning, both in-person and virtual.

### **Grade 5**

Students and teachers adjusted very well to the changes brought on by COVID-19 mitigation strategies. Teachers emphasized Emotional Intelligence using classroom Charters, frequent Mood Meter check-ins, as well as using mentor texts that allowed for discussions about feelings and emotions. This contributed to positive and supportive learning environments in all classrooms. Students developed, revised, and presented a series of projects across the curriculum throughout the year. An Early Explorers slideshow was presented as a culmination of our social studies unit. To culminate a nonfiction writing unit, students chose a "timeless" topic for a feature article. This article was created as a document, then published on a poster to be presented to the class. Reader's workshop had to be modified; however, students were still able to participate in books clubs of different genres. Fantasy continued to be a favorite unit for the fifth graders. Students created their own "Fantasy Island" creature and responded to open-ended questions related to their own fantasy book and class read-aloud. Students benefitted from the new *i-Ready Mathematics* program. The annual Connecticut Invention Convention was slightly different this year, but students were able to participate and design an invention that would solve a common problem.

### **Ongoing Work & School Improvement**

The Hatton Elementary School staff remains committed to improving student and teacher learning in the coming school year. The addition of intervention specialists and tutors will present enhanced opportunities to address specific learner needs in collaboration with classroom teachers. The Hatton School Leadership Team and Instructional Data Teams will closely monitor achievement data, and the SRBI Team will meet regularly to assess progress and make recommendations for additional assistance. Emotional Intelligence work will continue in all classrooms. Helping students regulate their emotions will increase their ability to manage academic demands and maintain positive social relationships. Most importantly, Hatton School remains committed to establishing and maintaining strong relationships with families to ensure a positive learning experience for all students.

## Superintendent's Annual Report 2020-2021

### **URBIN T. KELLEY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL**

*Marilyn Kahl, Principal*

#### **Accomplishments**

The students, staff, and families of Urbin T. Kelley Elementary School had an outstanding 2020-2021 school year, despite the many challenges faced. The year began with much uncertainty and trepidation as mitigation protocols were put in place to ensure the health and safety of all. From day one, everyone embraced the new changes and demonstrated consistent perseverance, dedication, collaboration, and communication. Significant academic growth was achieved at all grade levels this year, with an increased focus on integration of online resources, assessments, and platforms to enhance teacher instruction and student achievement. This was further enhanced with the addition of laptop devices for every student which, in turn, provided an easier transition to remote learning when necessary. Teachers in kindergarten successfully implemented the *Ready Classroom Mathematics* program, and Grade 1 teachers introduced the Lucy Calkins *Units of Study in Phonics* program to their students with great success.

#### **Celebrations**

Despite restrictions in place that included no extracurricular programs this year, the Kelley School staff and PTO (Parent/Teacher Organization) were committed to maintaining a positive climate and strong school community in a variety of ways. Selected fifth-grade students served as STEPS (Southington's Town-wide Effort to Promote Success) ambassadors and were the leaders of several community outreach projects, including a food drive in November to benefit Southington Community Services. The annual "Souper Bowl" can drive in February provided over 1,000 cans of food to Southington's Bread for Life. A Kelley School fifth-grader and a fourth-grader were selected as the Hartford County winners of the Fire Prevention Poster Contest. Two fifth-graders were honored at the Connecticut Association of Schools virtual Arts Awards program in March. In addition, three fifth-graders had their Connecticut Invention Convention projects chosen for the state finals, and one student was invited to the national competition for his invention.

Kelley School PTO leaders took an active role in creating opportunities for families to stay connected this school year. Monthly PTO meetings were held virtually and were well attended. Online family fun nights and a town-wide scavenger hunt were fun ways to bring families together, and the virtual Scholastic Book Fair was very successful. The Kelley School PTO's Facebook page was active all year long and provided an excellent avenue to share photos, announcements, questions, and accomplishments. While parents weren't in the school building this year, staff members took pictures weekly of in-school activities and learning. Those pictures were shared biweekly with parents in the principal's newsletter and were also in the Kelley School Memory Book, providing parents and families with a detailed look into the school year even if they couldn't be there in person. The PTO also sponsored an online cultural arts program for all grade levels this year. Teachers had access to full stage productions of adaptations from popular children's books through TheaterWorks.

Efforts to enhance students' cultural awareness continued this year. Third and fifth-grade students worked with Mr. Paul Vivian and Rev. Dr. Audley Donaldson three times throughout the school

## Superintendent's Annual Report 2020-2021 – Urbin T. Kelley School

year. Paul and Audley use humor and empathy to have open conversations about diversity, stereotypes, bullying, and developing understanding and acceptance.

Work continued around Emotional Intelligence (EI) as each class created a classroom Charter that served as the foundation for their community social and emotional expectations. This year, three staff members participated in the RULER (Recognizing, Understanding, Labeling, Expressing, and Regulating emotions) Institute virtual training through Yale University. Three additional staff members attended the virtual 2021 RULER Conference. These new Emotional Intelligence leaders will join the rest of the EI Lead Team to further enhance Kelley School's commitment to the social and emotional well-being of all members of the school community.

Just before the school year ended, several wonderful events took place. First, Kelley School's annual field day took place, with students enjoying a variety of events under the direction of our physical education teacher and limited parent volunteers. Also, in-person kindergarten graduation was held for each class in our cafetorium. Finally, fifth-grade recognition took place outside on a beautiful June day, with students under the new tents and families enjoying the special day seated on the lawn.

### **Ongoing Work**

While there are still many unknowns regarding the next school year, Kelley School staff will continue to be committed to providing high-quality instruction to our students, regardless of the obstacles. A reenergized focus on Emotional Intelligence will provide the foundation for maintaining a strong school community by embedding the anchor tools into individual classrooms and the school as a whole. The School Equity Leadership Team looks forward to raising awareness and understanding of diversity and racial consciousness. The School Data and Scientific Research-Based Intervention (SRBI) Teams will meet consistently to review student achievement and behavioral data to assist classroom teachers in providing tiered intervention strategy support to promote student growth.

Second-grade teachers will begin using the Lucy Calkins *Units of Study in Phonics* program this year, and fourth and fifth-grade teachers will implement the *Ready Classroom Mathematics* program. Support from the literacy and math specialists will be provided to teachers to assist in the introduction to these new programs.

It is the hope that Kelley School's many extracurricular programs be active next year. These include the Unified Sports Team, Drama Club, Art Club, Robotics Team, Math Olympiad Team, Be Kind Club and Running Club.

## Superintendent's Annual Report 2020-2021

### **ZAYA A. OSHANA ELEMENTARY SCHOOL**

*Josephine Rogala, Principal*

#### **Enhancements**

Despite the challenges brought on by the pandemic, Zaya A. Oshana Elementary School had a successful 2020-2021 school year. The social and emotional well-being of students and staff remained a priority. Led by the Emotional Intelligence Lead Team, staff facilitated weekly lessons using RULER (Recognizing, Understanding, Labeling, Expressing, and Regulating emotions), Responsive Classroom strategies, and *Second Step* lessons regularly schoolwide. Kindergarten through Grade 5 teachers, Special Education, and support staff utilized *Google Classroom* and *Google Meet* to engage students virtually as needed throughout the school year. The Oshana School website continued to be a resource for all stakeholders, and a digital interactive principal newsletter was sent home weekly to families highlighting student learning and celebrations. Student ambassadors attended a virtual leadership conference and led virtual ABC/STEPS (Southington's Town-wide Effort to Promote Success) assemblies each month, ending the school year with entire school assemblies outdoors following mitigation strategies. These assemblies celebrated the asset of the month, lessons connected to RULER, and recognition of "STAR" students. Diversity, equity, and inclusionary practices grew through diversifying classroom libraries and diversity training facilitated by Mr. Paul Vivian and Rev. Dr. Audley Donaldson for all third and fifth-grade students. In addition, four teachers attended the "Black History IS American History" virtual training facilitated by Teachers College, Columbia University, which led to meaningful changes in how students learned about historical events and the contributions of Black Americans throughout history.

#### **Celebrations**

The Oshana School community had many celebrations this school year, beginning with the announcement of fifth-grader Reese Naughton as the 2021 Connecticut Kid Governor. As a school, we supported her platform, "*Be Positive: Pandemic Perseverance*" engaging in schoolwide and community partnership activities throughout the school year.

The Oshana PTO (Parent/Teacher Organization) provided a variety of enrichment activities while working with safety restrictions and mitigation strategies. These included a haunted trail, pumpkin patch, classroom arts and crafts, class day for fifth-grade students at YMCA Camp Sloper, and a virtual *Apex* fundraiser which provided funding for STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) resources and a variety of diverse books for classroom libraries.

Oshana School continued its tradition of a Veterans Day program celebrating family members and staff, present and past, who served in the armed forces through a virtual dedication led by students and staff. Two virtual instrumental concerts highlighted the talents of Oshana's instrumental students, and a virtual art show showcased the artistic talents of kindergarten through fifth-grade students. An in-person kindergarten graduation and fifth grade recognition ceremony were held outdoors and attended by a limited number of family members at the end of the school year.

## Superintendent's Annual Report 2020-2021 – Oshana Elementary School

Teachers continued their commitment to improving their practice through virtual professional development and connecting with district coaches throughout the school year. All teachers implemented *Google Classroom* to support remote learners and weather-related, at-home school days. Technology assisted in strengthening home-school partnerships with a virtual open house, parent teacher conferences, and meetings with families when needed. In addition, teachers sent home weekly and monthly newsletters and implemented a mystery reader virtual option, so parents could read to classes through *Google Meet*. All kindergarten through fifth-grade students were provided a Chromebook which enhanced and supported learning opportunities throughout the school year. Oshana School ended the year with the exciting announcement that fifth-grade teacher Sandra Chavez was named Southington Public School's 2021 Teacher of the Year.

### **Ongoing Work/School Improvement**

Oshana staff will have a continued focus on the social, emotional, and academic needs of students during the 2021-2022 school year. Engaging families in RULER practices will be a focus area to support students in the area of social-emotional learning. The Oshana Student Ambassador program will continue to provide an avenue to grow student leaders in three areas: ABC/STEPS, safety patrol, and as an emotional scientist. Staff will focus on building capacity around the Vision of a Graduate and provide opportunities for students to demonstrate the six competencies. Professional learning will be an additional focus for staff in all content areas to strengthen *Ready Classroom*, Teachers College *Units of Study*, and Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) implementation. Collaboration between teachers and district coaches will ensure rigorous learning opportunities for all students. The Equity Leadership Team will resume the important work of raising the racial consciousness of all school stakeholders.

## Superintendent's Annual Report 2020-2021

### **SOUTH END ELEMENTARY SCHOOL**

*Erin Natrass, Principal*

#### **Enhancements**

The 2020-2021 school year was another successful year filled with accomplishments at South End Elementary School. The year was one filled with challenges no one could have expected. South End staff and students came together with an appreciation for the school community that had kept them together virtually during the spring of 2020 and would carry them through a school year filled with uncertainty. Despite the many challenges staff and students faced this year, students made emotional and academic growth. This year, South End School continued to focus on creating a safe school climate. Social and emotional well-being was the focus from the start of the school year. This was supported by continued implementation of the RULER approach (Recognizing, Understanding, Labeling, Expressing, and Regulating emotions) from the Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence. Not only was this a focus in each classroom and schoolwide, but it also extended to parents in an effort to support this growth at home during uncertain times. Resources were shared virtually with families, including book suggestions to support emotional growth. South End School celebrated classroom Charter champions each month during virtual school assemblies. Diversity, equity, and inclusion were also a focus to support a safe school climate.

#### **Celebrations**

The South End PTO (Parent/Teacher Organization) continued its dedicated work of supporting the school community despite restrictions. The PTO sponsored virtual cultural arts programs and enrichment activities. The tradition of having two book fairs continued with virtual events, supplying South End with new books for each classroom library. The PTO supplied cohorts with additional indoor and outdoor recess supplies necessary for keeping cohorts socially distant.

Implementation of Emotional Intelligence grew this year, as three staff members participated in RULER virtual training through Yale University. The lead team at South End provided training and support as teachers focused on introducing the Strategy Wall in classrooms. Classroom teachers continued to refine their classroom practices of creating class Charters and utilizing the Mood Meter. Each month, students voted for a member of their class who they believed best “lived” the Charter. The Charter champion received an award at the virtual monthly schoolwide assembly.

Continued efforts to promote cultural awareness were a focus this year. Mr. Paul Vivian and Rev. Dr. Audley Donaldson returned to South End to provide diversity training to third and fifth graders. The school counselor collaborated with primary grade teachers to facilitate age-appropriate lessons about differences and diversity with a connection to Emotional Intelligence. Book orders were structured to fill classroom libraries with texts that were “lenses” and “mirrors” for students.

Teacher collaboration was essential this year. A benefit of having virtual team planning, teachers were able to easily connect with district support staff for necessary professional coaching and reflection.

## Superintendent's Annual Report 2020-2021 – South End Elementary School

Technology continued to be a primary focus for all grade levels. Each classroom teacher had a *Google Classroom* to support temporary remote learners. Teachers provided parents with a virtual glimpse of their classroom through a virtual open house. Teachers had access to video mini-lessons through Teachers College. Computer-based assessments were used to analyze student growth. Technology was essential in maintaining a strong home-school connection. A weekly “Week in a Peek” and virtual parent meetings allowed for the school to share the celebrations and progress of the school year with families.

### **Ongoing Work**

As South End continues to work at creating a positive school climate during the 2021-2022 school year, staff will enhance their understanding of Emotional Intelligence along with diversity, equity, and inclusion. The Emotional Intelligence Lead Team will continue supporting teachers emphasizing the importance of the anchor tools of Emotional Intelligence into both classroom and school environments and expanding this to include other important components such as student leaders and a parent leadership team. The South End Equity Leadership Team will lead conversations about racial consciousness and provide action steps to ensure these conversations are carried out in all classrooms. The Equity Leadership Team will continue to work with the District Equity Leadership Team to reflect and adjust this ongoing work.

Teacher professional learning will expand during the 2021-2022 school year with a focus on utilizing *i-Ready* data along with the Ready Classroom program to enhance our numeracy instruction. Additionally, teachers will continue to refine their instructional practices in literacy through the implementation of the Teachers College *Units of Study*. The district Science Specialist will work alongside teachers as they continue to refine their Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) units. The collaboration between teachers and district coaches will be essential to ensure high-quality instruction to attain rigorous student achievement goals.

## Superintendent's Annual Report 2020-2021

### **WILLIAM M. STRONG ELEMENTARY SCHOOL**

*Melissa Barbuto, Principal*

#### **Enhancements**

The 2020-2021 school year was another year full of amazing accomplishments at William M. Strong Elementary School. This past year has been a challenge like none other Strong School has ever faced, full of uncertainties and stress that have never been experienced before. However, staff and students embraced this challenge with a smile and have shown that with dedication, perseverance, collaboration, and a positive mindset, anything is possible. Despite the many obstacles faced this year, students made significant academic and social-emotional growth. This year, Strong School continued to focus on cultivating a positive school climate. The entire school implemented components of the Responsive Classroom approach, expanded the implementation of Emotional Intelligence to all students and parents, and encouraged a growth mindset through daily whole school virtual morning announcements and monthly virtual activities and presentations led by students.

#### **Celebrations**

Despite the many restrictions presented this year due to COVID-19, the Strong PTO (Parent/Teacher Organization) continued its dedication to supporting the Strong School community through cultural arts programs, enrichment activities, fundraisers, and family night events, including virtual book fairs, a virtual pizza night, a virtual after school Spanish Club, and a virtual talent show.

Work around Emotional Intelligence continued to expand and thrive this year with the implementation of student self-awareness leaders and an Emotional Intelligence Parent Leadership Team. Additionally, two staff members attended Yale's Center for Emotional Intelligence National RULER (Recognizing, Understanding, Labeling, Expressing, and Regulating emotions) Conference, and two other staff members were invited to present. Each month, students voted for a Charter champion within their classrooms to recognize and celebrate someone who "lived" the Charter each day. Charter champions were recognized monthly through virtual morning announcements and by a video message sent to their families. Several staff meetings were designated to focus on self-care for staff to strengthen their emotional well-being.

Expansion of the district preschool program took place at Strong School this year. Three district pre-K classrooms are now housed at Strong School. Continued efforts to enhance cultural awareness among students were taken. Mr. Paul Vivian and Rev. Dr. Audley Donaldson returned to Strong School to provide third and fifth graders with diversity training.

Kindergarten through fifth-grade teachers continued to incorporate key components of the Responsive Classroom approach into their classrooms to build a positive community. In addition to the morning meeting, all teachers implemented key components of Emotional Intelligence through the creation of classroom Charters, checking in on the Mood Meter, creating strategy walls, and implementing conflict resolution lessons, all of which had a positive impact on students'



## Superintendent's Annual Report 2020-2021 – Strong Elementary School

social and emotional growth.

Additionally, due to the increase in technology provided to staff and students, all teachers enhanced the use of technology in the classroom. Furthermore, second-grade teachers implemented the Lucy Calkins *Units of Study in Phonics* program, and first and third-grade teachers implemented the *Ready Classroom Mathematics* program.

### **Ongoing Work**

As Strong School continues to work on creating a positive school climate, staff will continue to deepen and expand their understanding of Emotional Intelligence. Work will be expanded in this area by embedding the anchor tools of Emotional Intelligence into classrooms and school environments through student leadership. Student and parent leadership teams will be expanded upon to embed this approach into the community. Teachers will also continue to utilize the Responsive Classroom component, morning meeting, as a structure to implement Emotional Intelligence and build a positive school community. Additionally, the School Equity Leadership Team will continue its work around raising racial consciousness and leading these conversations with staff. The staff looks forward to continuing the work with Instructional Learning Teams next year, focusing on deepening teachers' understanding of exemplary practice within math and language arts. Teachers in fourth and fifth grade will implement the *Ready Classroom Mathematics* program. With this, all teachers in kindergarten through Grade 5 will be implementing the *Ready Classroom Mathematics* program.

For the 2021-2022 school year, restructuring of classrooms will take place to create an Early Childhood Center on the lower level of the school. The Family Resource Center and all three pre-K classrooms will relocate to the lower level of the building. In addition, an outdoor play area along with an Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) room will be added as well.

## Superintendent's Annual Report 2020-2021

### **REUBEN E. THALBERG ELEMENTARY SCHOOL**

*Katie Reeves, Principal*

#### **Accomplishments**

Reuben E. Thalberg Elementary School remained committed to excellence in teaching and learning during the 2020-2021 school year. In a year unlike any other, the staff remained flexible and encouraged students to persevere through challenges. Students continued to grow academically, socially, and behaviorally. Each day, students and staff recited a shared pledge, "Today, I will try my best to be safe, respectful, and responsible." This pledge helped create a mutual agreement and positive climate among all stakeholders.

While traditional clubs were not allowed this year, Thalberg students found ways to connect with their classroom cohorts on a different level. Some classes worked together to maintain the garden beds by weeding and watering. The second-grade classes were able to plant herbs and vegetables. Other class cohorts created bulletin boards with positive messages for the school to enjoy. The ABC/STEPS (Southington's Town-wide Effort to Promote Success) Club was able to meet virtually and provided the school with virtual assemblies that focused on the assets and pillars for the month. These assemblies acknowledged asset winners from each classroom.

Emotional Intelligence was especially important for the entire Thalberg community this year. In all classrooms, a Charter was formed that allowed students to describe how they wanted to feel each day while at school. In each classroom, Emotional Intelligence lessons were taught multiple times per week. The students learned how to recognize, label, and regulate their emotions. Teachers focused on building a classroom community through morning meetings.

The PTO (Parent/Teacher Organization) continued to enrich the lives of Thalberg students. They provided the students with several virtual events, including an author visit, a book fair, and even a virtual night with a magician. Throughout the year, the PTO supplied teachers with materials, books, and recess toys. They put together many wonderful surprises for the fifth-grade students, including lawn signs, a celebration day, and a trip to YMCA Camp Sloper. Thalberg families were unable to volunteer in-person this year, but they still participated in special events such as the Fifth Grade Celebration. Some parents were even special guest readers, virtually. Parents were able to meet virtually with their child's teacher for conferences as well.

Thalberg continued the tradition of giving back during the 2020-2021 school year. Donations were collected and made to local scholarships and charities such as YMCA Camp Sloper, the Hannah Weir Scholarship, Southington High School's All Knight Grad Party, Relay for Life, and Connecticut Brain Tumor Alliance. The PTO also established the Elizabeth Rimkie Memorial Scholarship that was awarded to a graduating Southington High School senior.

#### **Celebrations**

The "Friday Phone Calls" continued this year. Every Friday, the principal visited classrooms and recognized a student by calling their parent. Many phone calls were made to acknowledge both the hard work of the students and the dedication of the teachers and families. The students also

## Superintendent's Annual Report 2020-2021 – Reuben E. Thalberg School

began to recognize the adults in the building this year with the “Wednesday Woo-hoo.” Students nominated an adult who helped them at any point in the year and stated how this person helped them feel in the green or yellow on the Mood Meter. The nominees were announced as part of the morning announcements on Wednesday mornings.

### **Kindergarten**

The kindergarten day was structured a little differently this year. Students were given a recess break in the morning and a play break in the afternoon. The kindergarteners were unable to sit at tables together and instead had their own workspace at a desk. They managed their own materials and learned a bit about organization. While they still experienced hands-on learning, centers were limited to two students at a time. The students did a remarkable job following the rules and learned to become “super-readers” during Reader’s Workshop.

### **Grade 1**

Reader’s and Writer’s Workshop continued in first grade. The students read at their “just right” reading level as they learned key skills for becoming more seasoned readers. In science, all four classrooms were able to incubate eggs and hatch chickens in the spring. The teachers were even able to set up cameras so students could log in at home and share the excitement with their families. They also had a visit from Curious Critters as a fun culmination to their science unit.

### **Grade 2**

The grade two team worked for their second year to implement *Ready Classroom Mathematics*. The program allowed students to work at their own level and receive enrichment or reinforcement if needed. During Reader’s and Writer’s Workshop, students continued to strengthen their language arts skills. All of the second graders were also able to plant herbs and vegetables in Genevieve’s Teaching Garden as part of their science unit in the spring. They enjoyed spending the time outside and getting dirty.

### **Grade 3**

Students in third grade focused on character traits and reading chapter books during language arts instruction. They became fully immersed in the mystery book clubs and enjoyed putting their problem-solving skills to work. In science, the students were fully engaged in the scientific inquiry process and finished the year learning about heredity in one of the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) Units of Study. The third graders utilized the grassy areas outside all year long to learn while socially distanced.

### **Grade 4**

Grade 4 students continued their work in Reader’s and Writer’s workshop with a focus on book clubs and historical fiction. Students were involved in deep conversations around theme and character traits. The Grade 4 teachers focused on Emotional Intelligence throughout the year. They built strong classroom communities with frequent class discussions around conflict-resolution and problem-solving. They checked in on the Mood Meter and lived by their classroom Charters.

## Superintendent's Annual Report 2020-2021 – Reuben E. Thalberg School

### **Grade 5**

The fifth graders at Thalberg continued to be leaders this year. They made the schoolwide daily announcements each morning and served as role models throughout the school. They participated in two seminars on diversity and inclusion presented by Mr. Paul Vivien and Rev. Dr. Audley Donaldson. Students were able to participate in a presentation by the Connecticut Historical Society called “Amistad: A Journey to Justice.” They finished the year with an outdoor ceremony to recognize their hard work and a class day at YMCA Camp Sloper to celebrate.

### **Ongoing Work & School Improvement**

The Thalberg School community will continue to work on a positive school climate. Through the pandemic, the entire school community has learned to become flexible and embrace a growth mindset. Thalberg will continue to embrace the power of positive thinking and improvement. The work around Emotional Intelligence and RULER (Recognizing, Understanding, Labeling, Expressing, and Regulating emotions) will continue and strengthen the school climate. Staff will continue to deepen their understanding of Emotional Intelligence through the training institute at Yale University. All staff recognizes the need to teach the whole child. Teachers will continue to strengthen Tier 1 instruction and interventions provided for students in all academic subjects as well as social-emotional areas.