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○ APRIL

○ 2016

## SOUTH WINDSOR PUBLIC SCHOOLS

# Curriculum and Instruction

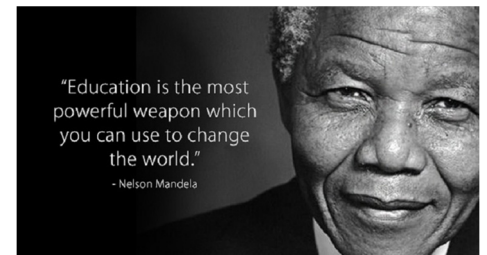
## SPECIAL REPORT

### CULTIVATING AND SUPPORTING CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE CLASSROOMS AND LEARNING COMMUNITIES

The Office of Curriculum and Instruction is pleased to provide this Special Report which highlights the district's efforts to cultivate and support culturally responsive classrooms and learning communities. The ongoing work of our teachers and staff includes the creation of enriching experiences that expand the depth of knowledge for students beyond today's classroom. In addition to the curriculum units of which they are a part, these experiences also seek to foster inclusivity and understanding of today's global society.

This report is intended to provide information regarding a variety of initiatives and activities within South Windsor Public Schools. We have established partnerships with outside agencies such as the Anti-Defamation

League, CREC's Institute of Teaching and Learning, and the Hartford Region Open Choice Program. We have also brought in individual experts such as Deacon Arthur Miller, Marji Lipshez-Shapiro and Nilofer Haider. Many teachers and administrators have participated in book clubs, workshops and discussions regarding social justice, culturally responsive teaching, and socially inclusive learning environments. Schools throughout the district have created activities that engage families and students in collectively exploring each other's heritage and traditions. We also promote civic and social responsibility and celebrate the efforts of our students as they seek to make a difference in the South Windsor community and beyond.



While this newsletter highlights only a sampling of activities across the district, there are many other initiatives that support these efforts. We look forward to partnering with parents and other stakeholders as we continue this important work.



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#### SOUTH WINDSOR PUBLIC SCHOOLS VISION STATEMENT

South Windsor Public Schools promotes an engaging and dynamic culture of learning that prepares students to achieve their own individual excellence. Within an emotionally safe environment, educators will foster students' academic, social and personal growth. Our students will demonstrate critical and creative thinking, self-direction, collaboration, adaptability, compassion and civic responsibility in an ever-changing global society.



# FOSTERING CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE TEACHING

*Multiculturalism is a system of beliefs and behaviors that recognizes and respects the presence of all diverse groups in an organization or society, acknowledges and values their socio-cultural differences, and encourages and enables their continued contribution within an inclusive cultural context which empowers all within the organization or society.*

## Multicultural Education

The goals of multicultural education include:

- Creating a safe, accepting and successful learning environment for all
- Increasing awareness of global issues
- Strengthening cultural consciousness
- Strengthening intercultural awareness
- Teaching students that there are multiple historical perspectives
- Encouraging critical thinking
- Preventing prejudice and discrimination

Source: Teachhub.com

Creating culturally responsive curricula is a thoughtful, comprehensive process. It requires reviewing and revisiting activities and concepts often to ensure that what is being taught or presented is appropriate for a student's intellectual, social and emotional needs. Culturally responsive teaching recognizes the importance of including students' cultural references in all aspects of learning. South Windsor Public Schools strives to embrace and develop multicultural perspectives by creating awareness of cultural similarities and differences.

South Windsor is pleased to partner with Gerald Hairston, a program manager in CREC's Institute for Teaching and Learning, in our ongoing curriculum work with teachers. Throughout his career, Gerald has worked across the educational landscape. He has supported culturally responsive education in statewide initiatives as well as at the district and school level. In particular, he has specialized and studied the areas of social justice and equity in education. Gerald has aided in systemic change in other focus areas of academic performance, behavior support and social emotional development as well.



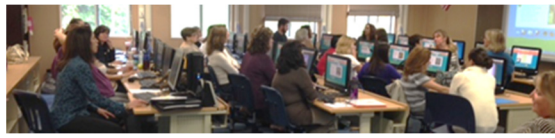
Mr. Hairston will be working with teachers at the middle school and high school over the coming year. On April 19, he met with teachers in the Social Studies department at Timothy Edwards to begin discussions around culturally responsive materials, pedagogy and classrooms. Moving forward, Mr. Hairston will continue this collaborative work with teachers from across the district.

In addition to our work with Mr. Hairston, we are also partnering with other CREC colleagues, including Sheryl McLean-Houle, Education Coordinator, and Gloria Mengual, Education Research Specialist of the Open Choice Program.



## CHARACTERISTICS OF CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE INSTRUCTION

1. Acknowledge students' differences as well as their commonalities
2. Validate students cultural identity in the classroom
3. Educate students about diversity of the world around them
4. Promote equity and mutual respect among students
5. Assess students, their families, the community, and school activities
6. Foster a positive interrelationship among students, their families, the community and school
7. Motivate students to become active participants in their learning
8. Encourage students to think critically
9. Challenge students to strive for excellence as defined by their potential
10. Assist students in becoming socially and politically conscious



# PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

LIFELONG LEARNING IS IMPORTANT FOR EVERYONE

The Connecticut State Department of Education defines high quality professional learning as “a process that ensures all educators have equitable access, throughout their career continuum, to relevant, individual and collaborative opportunities to enhance their practices so that all students advance toward positive academic and non-academic outcomes.” The eight standards for professional learning include, among others, cultural competence, leadership and learning designs.

The South Windsor district offers a variety of scheduled learning opportunities for its staff, including two professional days in November and March (or April). Additionally, K-5 teachers have the opportunity to collaborate on elementary early release days; middle school teachers work together through grade level professional learning community (PLC) blocks; and high school teachers meet by department or PLC during delayed opening times at the high school.

While some of the professional learning opportunities include whole group presentations pertaining to curriculum, technology or topics designed to improve student learning,

teachers are also given the chance to create individualized learning plans specific to their own student learning goals and development needs. While professional learning activities focus on a broad range of topics, many have focused specifically on cultural learning. A sampling of these activities are highlighted in the box to the right.

The district's Professional Development and Evaluation Committee (PDEC) has been responsible for gathering information, analyzing feedback from stakeholders, and gaining consensus to make recommendations regarding professional development for teachers and administrators. Comprised of teachers and administrators from across the district, the team is proud of the improvements realized as a result of its collaboration.

“We continue to find ways to enrich the professional learning experiences of South Windsor teachers and staff,” offered PDEC co-chair Laurie Chestone. “We really try to listen to the feedback we receive from staff through our PD surveys. Administration has been very supportive in allowing us to develop a plan that is flexible as well as meaningful.”

## Professional Development

Highlights from 2015—2016

### Outside Workshops

- ▶ Social Justice Symposium
- ▶ HOT Schools Summer Institute
- ▶ Creating Positive Engagement with Muslim Students and Families
- ▶ Creating a Socially Inclusive School
- ▶ Interfaith Summer Workshop
- ▶ CREC Dine and Discuss

### In-District PD

- ▶ Second Language Acquisition and Teaching
- ▶ Book Clubs
- ▶ Tribes Learning Communities Training
- ▶ Visual Thinking Strategies
- ▶ Southeast Asian Culture

### Guest Speakers/Presenters

- ▶ Nilofer Haider, Catholic Charities Southeast Asian Culture
- ▶ Jim Papoulis and Timothy Broege, World Renowned Composers
- ▶ Deacon Art Miller, Civil Rights Activist
- ▶ Marji Lipshez-Shapiro, ADL
- ▶ Jennifer Parsons, CREC
- ▶ Kevin Johnson, CT State Library

## SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EQUITY IN ACTION

In early April, South Windsor sent a team of five to a 2-day Social Justice and Equity in Action Symposium, “Understanding and Applying Culturally Responsive Teaching and Education.” The team included the Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, high school and middle school principals, social studies curriculum specialist, and an English teacher. Gerald Hairston, program manager for CREC’s Institute for Teaching and Learning, facilitated this event.



The symposium was offered by the CREC Institute for Teaching and Learning. Keynote speaker Dr. Geneva Gay, a Professor of Education from the University of Washington-Seattle, focused on looking at and developing policies, practices, structures and systems to provide equitable opportunities and outcomes for students. Dr. Gay is known for her scholarship in multicultural education, particularly as it relates to curriculum design, staff development, classroom instruction and intersections of culture, race, ethnicity, teaching and learning.

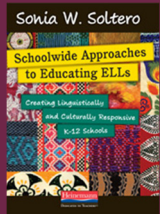


# PROFESSIONAL BOOK STUDIES

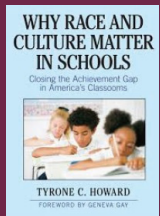
## Recent Book Club Selections



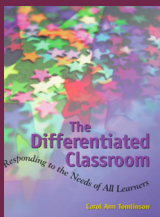
Culturally Responsive Teaching



Schoolwide Approaches to Educating ELLs



Why Race and Culture Matter in Schools



The Differentiated Classroom

For the third consecutive year, South Windsor participated in the Open Choice Book Club. Each year, educators in the region select a contemporary piece of education literature that highlights a key area of teaching and learning. This year's selection was "Culturally Responsive Teaching - Theory, Research, and Practice" written by Dr. Geneva Gay.

Book club participants received a copy of the book and a study guide prepared by CREC staff. Several key components of culturally responsive teaching were discussed, including teacher caring; teacher attitudes and expectations; formal and informal multicultural curriculum; culturally informed classroom discourse; and cultural congruity in teaching and learning strategies.

After three small group discussions between November and March, participants gathered in April with other educators from across the region. Dr. Gay, the book's author, facilitated an in-depth discussion around the text exclusively for book club members. This experience, as well as past book club discussions, have provided a special opportunity for educators to have a dialogue with some of the most well-respected educators in the world.

Mia Zaccardelli, a grade 8 world language teacher, shared the following regarding her book club experience. "I have felt very lucky to be able to participate in the Open Choice book club again this year. Reading Dr. Gay's book and discussing it with my group has really helped me to reflect on my teaching practice when it comes to meeting the needs of the diverse learners I have in my classroom. Many of the techniques I have learned and been supported with here at TEMS have been reinforced as good practice. Items such as cooperative learning groups, music and movement, differentiated instruction, and active student engagement were all mentioned specifically by Dr. Gay as elements of culturally responsive teaching."



## DEACON ART MILLER INSPIRES STUDENTS AND TEACHERS

Following an inspirational presentation to high school staff during professional development last April, this year South Windsor has been very fortunate to have renowned guest speaker and civil rights activist Deacon Arthur Miller return to work with students and staff at both Timothy Edwards Middle School and South Windsor High School. Deacon Miller is a certified trainer in Dr. King's nonviolence philosophy, and has worked with schools throughout Connecticut and beyond. His message to students is to stand up and do the right thing and always treat everyone with kindness and respect.

Over the course of several large and small group sessions, he discussed his work regarding social justice, talking about "earned and unearned advantages and disadvantages." He shared a powerful account of when he was in school and did not stand up for a person who was bullied, something he has regretted for more than fifty years. Student feedback was overwhelmingly positive, including one young man who shared that Deacon Miller inspired him "to be a better person."



*"Deacon Miller was really inspirational. He talked about us being leaders and how we should stand up for each other. I learned to stand up for kids who don't have the strength to stand up for themselves."*

Shannon S., grade 8

*"Our community can learn from his insight because he has had a much different experience... Deacon Miller's stories have shown me a different perspective of success and helped me to understand how some other people may see the world."*

Eugenia Y., grade 10

*"Deacon Miller shows us how to see things through different eyes. He gives us a strong sense that we are all in this together and you begin to realize how our capacity for understanding can enable our success and allow us to right the wrong."*

Mr. Webb, SWHS English



## FORGING PARTNERSHIPS

### Creating Positive Engagement with Muslim Students and Families

On January 28th, the Connecticut Anti-Defamation League (ADL), along with the Connecticut Association of Schools (CAS), the Connecticut Association of School Superintendents (CASS) and the Connecticut Association of Boards of Education (CABE), ran a workshop to help educators create positive environments for Muslim students and families. This program was the first of its kind in the State of Connecticut. A team of four

South Windsor Public Schools' administrators attended, including the Superintendent of Schools and principals from elementary, middle and high school levels.

During the 3-hour program, friends of the ADL, Shazia Chaudry and Dr. Saud Anwar, discussed the history and tradition of Islam. This was followed by a powerful panel of Muslim students and parents as well as Omar Bajwa, the Coordinator of Muslim Life

at Yale University, each of whom shared their personal stories and offered advice on how to create a more welcoming environment for Muslim students.



### Echoes and Reflections

Echoes and Reflections, a program developed by the ADL in collaboration with the USC Shoah Foundation Institute for Visual History and Education and Yad Vashem, provides middle and high school teachers with resources that enable them to properly teach about the Holocaust. "Since 2006, Echoes and Reflections has reached more than 800 educators of all religions in both public and private schools right here in Connecticut," said Marji Lipshez-Shapiro, Director of Education at ADL's Connecticut

Regional Office. The program provides critical tools to ensure that the next generation may live in a world which is more accepting, informed and respectful of religious differences.

High school social studies teacher Richard Mabey participated in the Echoes and Reflections program earlier this year. He and members of his department's PLC have integrated many of the resources and activities into the Holocaust unit which is taught as part of 9th grade Modern World History.

On November 3, Marji Shapiro facilitated a half-day workshop with small

groups of students. Ms. Shapiro reported that, "the focus was on how incidents of bias and prejudice, left unchecked, can grow into bigger issues." The workshop culminated with a Holocaust survivor sharing her experiences, including an opportunity for students to ask questions.

SWHS principal Dan Sullivan commented that this was "a very powerful experience for our students. They walked away with a better understanding of challenges discussed in the workshop, as well as a deeper appreciation for the opportunities the students have as citizens today."



Marji Lipshez-Shapiro

### Southeast Asian Culture

Nilofer Haider was invited to speak to faculty and staff at Orchard Hill Elementary School about Southeast Asian culture. Mrs. Haider is a resident of South Windsor, and is active in multiple cultural organizations across Connecticut and beyond. She has served on the Board of Trustees for the Charter Oak Cultural Center, is a member of the Human Relations Commission of the Town of South Windsor, and has been active with the Pakistani-American Association of Connecticut.

Mrs. Haider and her husband Mateen have been active in helping build awareness of cultural competence and the Southeast Asian cultures. Principal Mike Tortora shared that "the number of families coming to our school from this region is increasing each year, which is why Mrs. Haider's presentation was so important for our staff." During her presentation, she addressed such topics as family dynamics, religion, education, clothing/appearance and cultural beliefs.

Following the PD session on March 28, one teacher commented, "This session was probably one of the best PDs I have attended in all of the districts I have ever worked for. It was outstanding—fantastic presenter."





# TODAY'S CLASSROOM

## CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION UNITS



In recent years, curricula across the disciplines has undergone tremendous change as Connecticut districts have adopted new state standards for education.

These standards are designed to ensure that students are college and career ready by the time they graduate from high school.

The implementation of common core state standards in English language arts and mathematics have affected not only curriculum design but also standardized assessments. New standards for Social Studies were adopted in February 2015, and the Next Generation Science Standards were adopted in November. Other standards in the areas of visual arts, music, health education, world languages and even technology have also been released. The result: curriculum leaders and teachers are working diligently to review, update and implement classroom units and align texts and learning experiences with these new units.

The adoption of these new standards has created increased opportunities for curriculum leaders and teachers to revisit existing classroom practices and learn new ways of delivering instruction. Whenever possible, departments work together to provide meaningful learning experiences for students.

Examples include the integration of social studies concepts into a grade five language arts unit on civil rights, as well as the collaboration between high school Computer Apps and Early Childhood Education classes where students designed and developed computer apps on an iPad for three and four year olds.

Another example is the use of "Visual Thinking Strategies" (VTS) recently adopted by South Windsor's art teachers. VTS are helping students expand their interpretive skills by using visual arts prompts to describe and interpret what they see in all aspects of learning. Technology has played an important role in these changes, providing access to online resources, offering chances for virtual field trips to places and destinations not previously accessible, and creating different ways for students to demonstrate their understanding. Technology has also changed the way teachers are able to collaborate as they are able to work on curriculum documents in Google even if they are in different buildings.

### How Technology Has Influenced Today's Classroom

The days of chalkboards, poster board displays and book reports are slowly becoming a thing of the past as today's students emerge as the beneficiaries of a vast array of technological enhancements. In today's classroom you will see students at all levels presenting information via PowerPoint, or through applications such as Prezi or Linoit. You can walk into a classroom and see teachers sharing interactive lessons through SmartBoards, allowing them to receive real-time feedback through clickers and even phone apps. Links to videos, photographs and other online resources can be embedded into these items, allowing the user to navigate across multiple platforms with the click of a mouse.

In the 2016-2017 school year, all 9th and 10th grade students will receive Lenova Chromebooks, personal one-to-one computing devices. These devices will enable teachers to provide instruction knowing all students will have access to the resources and materials they need. This web-based technology allows students (and teachers) to collaborate on assignments and lessons.





## BRINGING LEARNING TO LIFE

In order for all students to be truly college and career ready they must be prepared to be members of the global society of which they are a part. To that end, South Windsor Public Schools utilizes a variety of strategies to create hands-on learning opportunities for its students, teachers and families.

Kindergarten students visit the South Windsor Public Library to learn about their local community. Second graders visit the Connecticut Historical Society and look at rural, urban, and suburban communities. Third grade classes visit Wood Memorial Library and take part in their Native American Program. Model United Nations at SWHS boasts the largest delegation participating in the World Affairs Council simulation in Connecticut with over 135 students. Students in science classes visit nature preserves, local geological formations and observatories to apply their classroom learning in a natural environment. AP government students work with the South Windsor registrar of voters on Election Day at polling places. Mock Trial students at the middle and high schools act as prosecution and defense in a trial scenario. Attendance at plays, cultural events, historic sites

and museums from all disciplines provide students exposure to a variety of real world learning experiences.

Guest speakers often visit classrooms to “share” their experiences. Student favorites have included Kevin Johnson of the CT State Library who visits schools and libraries across the state with his portrayal of Private William Webb, an actual civil war soldier who was a native of Hartford. Clubs like Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA) invite professionals from local businesses to speak with students about career and enterprise. Pleasant Valley Elementary, a Higher Order Thinking (HOT) school, sponsors a variety of activities throughout the year to integrate the arts across disciplines. These outside presenters help create an “arts rich” environment that motivates students to make connections between and among subject areas and ideas.

All of these experiences, whether off school grounds or brought into our classrooms, provide an invaluable opportunity for students to apply their learning or make real world connections as they cultivate intellectual growth in their journey to becoming global citizens.



Tell me and I forget.  
Teach me and I remember.  
Involve me and I learn.

- Benjamin Franklin



# CIVIC AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

## STUDENTS MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN OUR COMMUNITY

From the earliest grade levels, students in South Windsor are engaged in a variety of service projects designed to create awareness and foster caring for others. School mottos, developed collaboratively by both students and teachers, reflect these core values. Over time, this fundamental value system is evidenced by students initiating their own projects and campaigns. The following are just a few examples of districtwide activities in our schools.



In October, students and staff wear orange in support of **Unity Day**, a national awareness campaign to unite against bullying by promoting a safe school climate for everyone. Activities initiated across the district include poster contests, sidewalk decorating, assemblies and discussions.

**Random Acts of Kindness** is a theme that continues across the district all year long. Student displays provide reminders of the importance of demonstrating love and compassion for others. Student organizations regularly collect items for area shelters and food banks, and often initiate fundraising projects that relate to a cause close to their hearts.

For the last 20 years, TEMS students have held a **Silent Protest** against Hate and Violence. Students create posters about topics covered in the violence prevention unit and stand silently to

make other students aware of the violence that surrounds us and to encourage others to help end these behaviors.

**Empty Bowls** is an international grassroots effort to fight hunger. Students, teachers and community members join to create handcrafted bowls. Timothy Edwards hosts an Empty Bowls luncheon each year. For a small donation, guests are served a simple meal of soup and bread, and asked to keep a bowl as a reminder of all the empty bowls in the world. Each year, South Windsor High School students participate in a similar event in conjunction with MCC. Proceeds from both events are given to local area hunger organizations.

In December, the SWHS Spanish Department sold Nicaraguan bracelets called "pulseras" for the **Pulsera Project**, a student-based non-profit group that supports and provides jobs to Nicaragu-

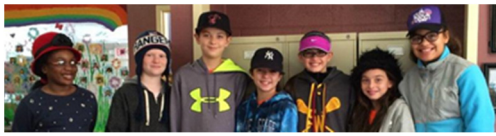
ans in need of help. Bracelets sold for \$5, and every donation went toward the program that empowers Nicaragua's underprivileged youth.



*"Be the change you wish to see in the world..."*

- ▶ Food Drives
- ▶ Hoops for Hearts
- ▶ Pennies for Patients
- ▶ Coat and Sock Collections
- ▶ Empty Bowls for Hunger
- ▶ Unity Day Against Bullying
- ▶ Hats for Cancer
- ▶ Relay for Life
- ▶ Humane Society





## Tribes Learning Community

A New Way of Learning and Being Together

For more than fifteen years, South Windsor Public Schools has been committed to the principles of the "Tribes Learning Community" process created by Jeanne Gibbs. Thousands of schools throughout the United States, Canada, Australia and other countries have become Tribes Learning Communities - safe and caring environments in which students can thrive.

Students achieve because they feel included and appreciated by peers and teachers; are respected for their different abilities, cultures, gender, interests and dreams; are actively in-

involved in their own learning; and have positive expectations from others that they will succeed. Students learn a set of collaborative skills so they can work well together in long-term groups (tribes). The focus is on how to help each other work on tasks, set goals and solve problems, monitor and assess progress, and celebrate achievements.

Four agreements are honored:

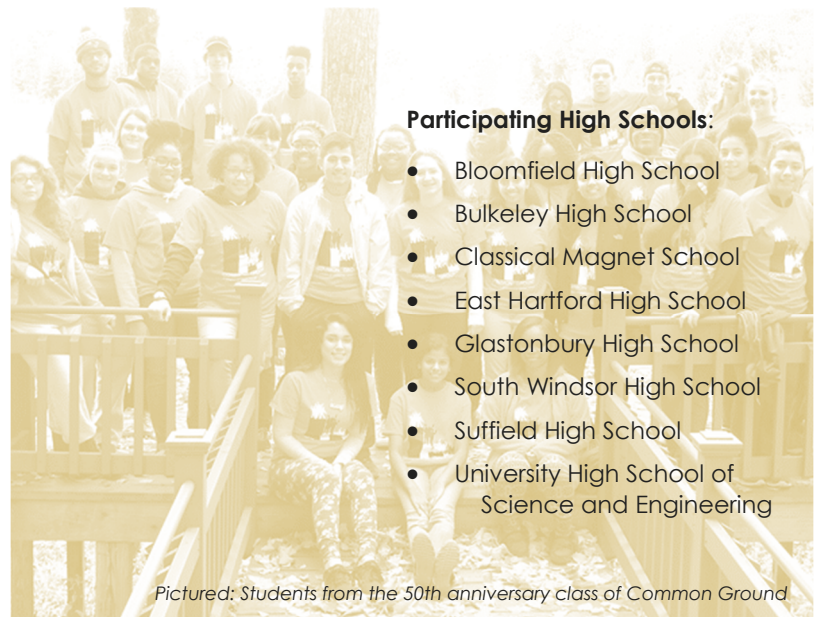
1. attentive listening
2. appreciations/no put downs
3. mutual respect
4. the right to pass

The learning of academic material and self-responsible behavior is assured because teachers utilize methods based upon brain-compatible learning, multiple intelligences, cooperative learning and social development research. All elementary teachers and administrators, as well as many middle and high school teachers, have been trained in the Tribes process. This has created a collegial work environment where staff work together in supportive groups. It has also fostered cooperative and social skills that students have adopted into their everyday lives.

## FINDING COMMON GROUND

### LEADERSHIP PROGRAM FOR LOCAL STUDENTS

Common Ground is a 15-week program, offered each fall, that engages urban and suburban high school students from the Greater Hartford area in leadership training, diversity awareness, and community problem solving. The program's mission is to "enable students from the Greater Hartford area to develop an appreciation and comfort level with people of diverse backgrounds and to become thoughtful, responsible and imaginative leaders in order to better serve their communities." Students from South Windsor High School have participated in Common Ground for the past three years. Together with students from Bloomfield, Hartford, East Hartford, Glastonbury and Suffield, these teens have fostered new relationships, developed leadership skills and learned firsthand the benefit of finding common ground.



#### Participating High Schools:

- Bloomfield High School
- Bulkeley High School
- Classical Magnet School
- East Hartford High School
- Glastonbury High School
- South Windsor High School
- Suffield High School
- University High School of Science and Engineering

*Pictured: Students from the 50th anniversary class of Common Ground*



# CELEBRATING FAMILY HERITAGE AND TRADITIONS



An important part of learning about family heritage and culture is the firsthand exchange of ideas, perspectives and customs with others in the school community. Throughout the year, this is accomplished in a variety of ways.

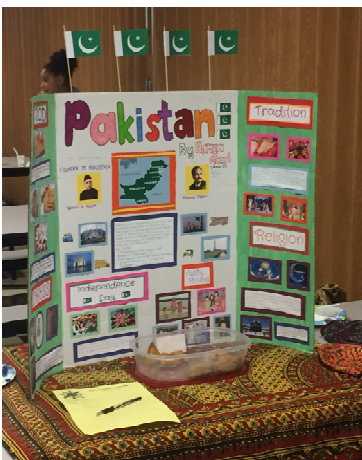
At Timothy Edwards Middle School, grade level teams explore family heritage and traditions through their Social Studies and World Language classes. National flags are hung in the lobby to represent the origins of TEMS students. Awareness of social and political issues throughout the world is created through classroom discussions, fundraisers and student organizations such as Model U.N. and Interact Club. High school students proudly share pieces of their culture and heritage through clubs such as the **Southeast Asian, Japanese Culture** and **Spanish** clubs.

In our elementary schools, classroom activities include projects about culture, heritage, geography and celebrations. **Family Sharing Nights** foster community as families work together to create displays and share the sounds, tastes and traditions of their own cultures. Students come in traditional dress, bring in artifacts about their cultures, and perform songs and dances. These activities offer an opportunity for students to forge a deeper understanding of their own cultural identity in a tangible and meaningful way.

The music and visual arts programs are another vehicle through which South Windsor students can explore cultural learning. Music is an expressive language of culture; it tells a story, expresses ideas and offers opinions and shares emotions of life's experiences. Through choral and instrumental selections, students take an historical journey as they experience music from cultures and composers from all over the world. Similarly, visual arts units draw from cultural traditions to replicate historical artifacts. Many of these items are on display for families to view and share at the Art at the Capitol exhibit, and later at the student art shows held at the South Windsor Public Library.

Pleasant Valley principal Tiffany Caouette reflected that "it was wonderful to see a cross section of my school with families and students feeling very proud of who they are."

During the **Celebrations Around the World** unit, students from first and second grade research their own family histories and explore family traditions that are passed down through generations. Students also learn about how holidays, birthdays and other special traditions are celebrated in other countries and cultures.





## ENGLISH LEARNER STUDENTS AND PARENTS LEARN ABOUT AMERICAN CULTURE AND HISTORY

The English Learner (EL) parent/student field trip is an opportunity for the district's EL students and their parents to gain firsthand knowledge of American history by experiencing New England cultural and historic sites. Each year, EL teachers and tutors coordinate this event to provide a hands on learning experience for families. This contextual learning affords students a chance to practice language and social skills and to expand upon home to school connections with parents.

### Did you know?

**This year, there are more than 30 different languages spoken by our English Learner students. Among them:**

- |                |                  |
|----------------|------------------|
| Hindi          | Arabic           |
| Urdu           | Mandarin         |
| Spanish        | Portuguese       |
| Haitian-Creole | Polish           |
| Vietnamese     | Indian languages |
| Cantonese      | Korean           |

## REACHING BEYOND OUR BORDERS

### EXPERIENCING CULTURE THROUGH TRAVEL

In recent years, virtual field trips are emerging as a means of experiencing global communities without leaving the classroom. While travel abroad can yield an incomparable experience, sometimes cost or circumstances make travel an impractical option.

South Windsor's World Language program presented us with one such situation this year as we were forced to make the difficult decision of cancelling international travel. In the interest of the safety and well-being of our students, as well as efforts to limit financial risk for families, the trip to France was cancelled.

As a result, high school French teacher Lisa Rosano worked with colleagues to create an alternate, albeit unique, opportunity to visit France. She developed "Voyage Virtuel" which represented a full-day Paris simulation and in-school travel experience.

As part of this virtual travel experience, she converted the library classroom into the interior of an airplane. Students were given highly authentic looking boarding passes and passports. They saw a French film clip on the plane. When they "landed," zones were created throughout the library to simulate the metro lines in France, and students had to use maps to find their way to historic sites. They even received "Paris Paix" tokens made with the school's 3D printer which were immediately added to their keychains as souvenirs. Students gave presentations on research they had conducted.

The high school has a long-standing relationship with a small school in Montague, France, with whom they have developed an informal, biennial student exchange. Unable to reciprocate the U.S. hospitality extended to them in October, the exchange students skyped with SWHS stu-



dents, allowing the students to practice their conversational language skills.

"I wanted to give students who have invested so much in their learning a culminating experience that they would remember," Ms. Rosano shared. "This 'Voyage Virtuel' allowed students to learn more about francophone cultures through food and other activities, and even solve problems in a different language. All of these elements are key for language learners and for becoming effective global citizens."

Superintendent Kate Carter commented on the Voyage Virtuel. "While the activity cannot compare to a trip to Paris, our students did learn some other important life lessons. They learned that in life we will face disappointment as a result of things out of our control, but it is how we respond to these disappointments that can make a difference. They witnessed the passion and caring demeanor of their teacher who put her all into mitigating their disappointment. She modeled resiliency and creativity. They saw what dedicated educators do for students. The reason the trip was canceled is heartbreaking, but the positive attitudes of our teachers, students and parents remind us of the good that is in this world."

## SOUTH WINDSOR CELEBRATES 50-YEAR PARTNERSHIP WITH OPEN CHOICE PROGRAM



For 50 years, the Hartford Region Open Choice Program has worked hard to reduce the racial isolation of Hartford and suburban students, while ensuring that all students have access to a high-quality education. The program began as "Project Concern" in 1966 during the civil rights movement and became the Open Choice program in 1997. Open Choice allows children who live in Hartford to attend suburban schools and students who live in suburban communities to attend school in Hartford.

"Fifty years ago, it took a lot of courage to make change happen," said CREC Executive Director Greg Florio. In 1966, the five districts of Farmington, Manchester, Simsbury, **South Windsor** and West Hartford took the first steps to establish the program in partnership with community leaders and parents.

South Windsor Public Schools is proud to be one of the original participants in the Project Concern/Open Choice Program. Since 1966, the school district's commitment to the program has remained steadfast. In honor of the 50th anniversary celebration, we have reached out to parents and alumni who have reflected on their experiences.

Dalyn Delgado, the mother of two Open Choice students who attend South Windsor schools, shared her enthusiasm for the district. "For the past 8 years, my son and daughter have been enrolled in the South Windsor school system. My children and I feel that we are part of the South Windsor community. My children not only interact with children in South Windsor, but many of the South Windsor families have visited our community and learned about Hartford and our diverse community."

Nancy Ransom, parent of a 2011 graduate and grandparent of a current Eli Terry student, said, "I love South Windsor. My older son attended here for all twelve years. It felt like he was going to private school. We heard from the school on everything. If it was good we heard about it. I don't always have to follow up because I can trust the school is doing everything right."

James Hendon, a 1985 SWHS graduate, now lives in Texas. After serving in the Air Force and earning a Bachelors degree in Theology, James works in child protective services as a way of giving back. Hendon is passionate about the value of the Open Choice program. "From day one I felt included and a part of the [South Windsor] community. This program not only impacted me, but affected future generations, as my children have a better life because of [the program]. There were challenges, but I never tried to find excuses or blame others, I focused on doing my part." Michael Giannamore, a lifelong resident of South Windsor, met James in the first grade at Wapping Elementary. "My friendship with James allowed me to gain perspectives on the world that I would not have otherwise developed. The program is not only positive for the students coming from Hartford, but positively impacts the students in South Windsor." Michael and James have remained friends for over forty years. Hendon remains extremely proud of his former schools, and maintains "I am a Bobcat for life!"



Friends for life: James Hendon and Michael Giannamore with Hendon's son

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