

STONINGTON SCHOOL NEWS

APRIL 2006

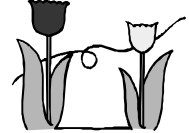
Stonington Public Schools/860-572-0506

ISSUE 8



A NEW VIEW PROVIDING EDUCATIONAL CHOICE

*Virginia Brown, Principal
West Vine Street School*



Two years ago, a group of stakeholders of the Stonington Public Schools including: teachers, parents, recent graduates, current students, administrators, employers, business leaders, support staff, and local government officials convened to design a strategic five-year plan for the Stonington Public Schools. The vision of this plan was to develop one that would be “far-sighted, exciting, and full of challenging goals that could take the district to significantly different levels of performance for all students and adults.” (The Next Generation of Stonington Public Schools)

To this end, the planning team explored the unique qualities of Stonington and the components of what constitutes successful public schools in today’s world. To ensure that the plan would meet the needs of our students and our community, the team identified core values, developed desired specifications, and key descriptors of what the next generation of the Stonington Public Schools should be like based on the thousand-plus comments gained from stakeholders.

As a result of the planning team’s work, the Stonington

Public School’s Strategic Goals were created. Four goals were developed along with specific strategies aimed at increasing student achievement. Those goals are:

- Developing Centers of Excellence that provide choices for educational opportunities based on student needs and interests.
- Creating adult learning communities to foster continuous learning.
- Providing space and resources determined by student needs and community needs.
- Focusing on shared accountability.

At West Vine Street School over the past two years, we have been dedicated to the implementation of each of these goals. One way we are incorporating these strategic goals has been to explore ways to implement the concept of the development of a Center of Excellence and move WVSS toward this vision. A Center of Excellence is defined as a place that provides “choices for educational opportunities based upon student needs and interests.” A Center of Excellence can further be described as educational opportunities that promote:

- Strengthening positive adult/ student relationships
- Creating small student learning communities
- Using instructional strategies of “*Students Learn Best When...*”
- Making decisions based on research and data
- Integrating technology
- Incorporating flexibility
- Fostering engagement and demanding rigor

We are dedicated to the idea that our students and families benefit greatly from the opportunity to make choices and decisions about what best meets the needs of each individual student in relationship to learning environments and experiences. During the 2005-2006 school year the WVSS staff has been researching and reflecting on ways to create learning communities that are aligned with the district’s strategic plan.

As a result of this planning process, next year, we will offer a variety of learning environments to our students and families. There will be traditional kindergarten, first, and second grade classes, transitional classrooms (where students of different grade levels

and needs are provided with additional support), a reversed mainstream classroom (where typical peers are integrated into special education classes), and a first to second grade looping class.

The looping classes will be a new choice for WVSS's students and parents. Looping is defined as a systematic way of grouping students in a class with the same teacher for consecutive years. One reason to consider children remaining with the same teacher for two years is to promote the social construction of knowledge and to develop long-term relationships among peers and adults. Looping classes also often emphasize the building of a community where the learning is cooperative and collaborative. These elements of the looping classroom may or may not meet an individual learner's style and


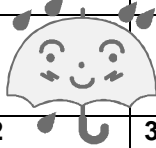
preferences for learning, hence the importance of choice and providing a variety of different learning environments for children. Additionally, staying with the same teacher and cohort for consecutive years is beneficial for some students and their families while other students benefit more from the opportunity to meet different teachers and peers.

The goal of offering various research-based programs and/or classes correlates directly with all the components outlined in the definition of a Center of Excellence. The aim of developing different types of classrooms is to ensure that we provide opportunities that are varying in nature to meet the instructional as well as the social and emotional needs of all of the students at WVSS. In our plans for West Vine we emphasize the importance of flexibility and

strengthening all adult/student and student/student relationships. However, just because one program or class is most beneficial for one student, does not mean that it would be the best fit for all students.

During the next few weeks, we have scheduled informational evenings for our parents to provide them with additional information about the opportunities that will be available next year at WVSS. These opportunities will assist everyone in making the best decision for their child.



 APRIL 2006 SPS DISTRICT CALENDAR						
SUN	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SAT
						1 8:30-1:30 PMS Express Yourself Conference
2 SHS NEASC Visit begins	3 7:00 PMS SBIT 9-3 DMS Book Fair SHS NEASC Visit	4 9-11:30 WVSS Book Fair 9-3 DMS Book Fair 1-2 WBSS Parent Math Day 6:30 WBSS PTO Mtg. SHS NEASC Visit	5 10-11 WVSS Book Fair 9-3 DMS Book Fair 5-7 DMS Family Night Book Fair SHS NEASC Visit	6 9-1 DMS Book Fair 1:10 Early Dismissal - DMS, WBSS, WVSS – Parent Conferences 2-6 WVSS Book Fair 7:30 Central Office BOE mtg.	7 9-11 WVSS Book Fair 9-1 DMS Book Fair 6-9 MMS Basket Raffle 7:30 SHS Fiddler on the Roof 6-8 PMS Grade 6 Dance	8 7:30 SHS Fiddler on the Roof 7:30-11:30 SEF Dinner Dance
9 2:00 SHS Fiddler on the Roof	10 4:30 DMS SBIT 7:00 SHS K-12 Committee mtg. 7-9 SHS BOF Public Hearing of the Budget WBSS Marvelous Monday	11 6:00 MMS SBIT 6:00 WVSS PTO Mtg. 6:30 SHS SEF DMS Music Concert 5:45 Grade 1 6:30 Grade 2 7:15 Grade 3 8:00 Grade 4 WVSS Spirit Day- Backwards Day	12 6:30 WBSS 4 th Grade Play at SHS 7:00 PMS PTO mtg.	13 7-8:30 SHS SBIT Parent Forum Middle School Report Cards go home	14 No School Good Friday	15

16	17	18	19	20	21	22
	SPRING RECESS					
23	24 4:30 WVSS SBIT Mtg.	25 5:00 SHS SBIT Mtg. 5:00 WBSS SBIT Mtg. 7:00 PMS Parent Night with Detective Knowles	26	27 7:00 DMS PTO Mtg.	28	29 6:30 SHS Hall of Fame Recognition Dinner 12:00 p.m. DUCK RACE Westerly/ Pawcatuck River Park
30						