

**Superintendent:** Dr. Joseph Macary

**Assistant Superintendent:** Mr. Robert Testa

**Members of Board of Education:**

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Mason Thrall

**Responsibilities and Duties:** The authority, the duties and the responsibilities of the Board have been established by the Connecticut statutes, federal laws, and the town charter. The Board of Education scheduled regular meetings on the second and fourth Mondays of each month with the exception of July, when it did not meet, and August and December when it met only once. In addition, Board committees met throughout the year to deal with budget, policy, facilities, negotiations, curriculum and communications.

**School Data:**

The following is a list of the seven schools, the grade levels in those schools, and the October 1, 2023 enrollment for each school:

- Center Road School 464 (PK-5)
- Lake Street School 259 (K-5)
- Maple Street School 254 (K-5)
- Northeast School 249 (PK-5)
- Skinner Road School 318 (PK-5)
- Vernon Center Middle School 685 (6-8)
- Rockville High School 978 (9-12)

The total enrollment for the district was 3,207. The total budget for the 2023-24 school year was \$57,867,876.

**Mission Statement**

The Vernon Public Schools, in partnership with family and community, is committed to provide a quality education, with high expectations, in a safe environment where all students become independent learners and productive contributors to society.

## **Core Beliefs**

- Advocate a “whole child” approach to student learning
- Maximize student performance and set high expectations
- Integrate family and community with the education system

## **Diversity Statement**

The Vernon Board of Education reaffirms our commitment to continue the work being done and continues to look for new opportunities that promote equity and diversity in the Vernon Public Schools. We embrace diversity and inclusion, and absolutely condemn racism and discrimination.

## **District Goals**

- *Goal 1* – Build and improve relationships and partnerships with family and community
- *Goal 2* – Increase the achievement of every student through high-quality curriculum, instruction, and assessment
- *Goal 3* – Promote safe environments that are socially, emotionally, and physically conducive to learning

## **Vision Statement**

The Vision of the Vernon Public Schools is that every graduate is a Critical Thinker, Collaborator, Communicator, Resilient Individual, and Responsible Citizen.

## **Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment**

Under the leadership of Assistant Superintendent Robert Testa and the Directors of Teaching and Learning Dominique Fox (Secondary) and Melissa Trantolo (Elementary), the Vernon Public Schools continued to support the achievement of every student through high quality curriculum, instruction and assessment. Certified teachers continue to collaborate in Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) to support teaching and learning across all classrooms.

The Office of Teaching and Learning believes in providing continuous support to teachers new to Vernon Public Schools in order to assist their growth and development in becoming highly confident and effective educators. Prior to the start of the school year, all newly hired teachers were provided with a comprehensive three-day New Teacher Academy. This academy focused on the classroom environment, classroom management and the importance of relationship building with students. Additionally, new hires also receive job-embedded coaching on planning in instruction.

Professional learning provided for all elementary teachers during the 2023-2024 school year focused on curriculum, the science of reading and continued to emphasize social emotional learning and equitable learning practices. Additionally, professional learning for both middle school and high school teachers focused on developing a deeper understanding of formative assessment, student-to-student discourse, and instructional rigor through professional learning communities.

District instructional coaches and content area consultants continued to support teacher learning and development for both new and veteran teachers. Throughout the school year teachers received job-embedded coaching with actional feedback. All new teachers were also observed by their building principal(s) and a Director of Teaching and Learning and feedback was given.

In order to ensure an equitable learning environment where all students grow and thrive, the Teaching and Learning office worked closely with schools on the implementation of a comprehensive multi-tiered system of supports. This system is dedicated to meeting each student's academic needs.

**CENTER ROAD SCHOOL:**      **Mrs. Heather Earley, Principal**  
   **Mrs. Lori Purcaro, Assistant Principal**

Center Road School is the largest elementary school in the town of Vernon. This Pre-K through grade five school houses a student population of over 460 students and a dedicated staff. We host a number of programs for the district including 3 Preschool classes; one of them being the Preschool ABL program and the Renaissance Program.

To support student achievement in English Language Arts, we use a balanced literacy approach. This means our students engage in readers' workshop, writers' workshop, word work and guided reading. This allows for teacher modeling, guided work and independent practice. Each of our math lessons begins with a productive struggle problem. These problems encourage students to use multiple strategies to solve the same problem. The discussion that happens after allows students to hear how others solve problems and for the teachers to understand students understanding and misconceptions on the topics. Our WIN blocks in reading and math allow our Interventionists and Special Education teachers to support the students on their caseloads and for classroom teachers to see additional small groups. Through close monitoring of student data (both formal and informal), staff are able to make instructional decisions that meet all students' needs. Staff has begun working on analysis of the tasks they are asking students to complete in ELA and Math to ensure we are presenting students with challenging yet accessible tasks.

Students are able to engage in a variety of enrichment activities throughout the year. Identified students in grades 3-5 work with the district Gifted and Talented Teacher

weekly to extend their learning. Outside of the school day, students are able to participate in Lego League competitions in the fall. Our classroom teachers work to provide students with enrichment activities within the classroom to extend students learning and focus on their interests.

Technology is infused in daily learning across the grades. Classrooms have smart boards and students have access to quality platforms such as iReady and Lexia. In addition, there are Chromebook carts available for whole class and small group use. Our K-2 classrooms are equipped with iPads for center activities.

The Center Road core values are Caring, Responsible and Safe and these are embedded in all we do. In addition to our student-centered classrooms, we offer activities such as Student Council, Game Club, Chorus and Band. Also, social/emotional growth is fostered through our positive behavior supports, trauma informed approach and the use of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Step curriculum along with other Social-Emotional lessons facilitated by our Social Worker and School Psychologist. This year, we continued buddy classroom activities monthly where 2 classrooms came together to participate in a joint community building event. Many buddy classrooms opted to meet more than once a month to work together.

Center Road School is an integral part of the community. Yearly, our students contribute to the local food pantry, CCMC PJ Day, the firefighter's toy collection, and the American Heart Association. Teachers engage in Hopes and Dreams conferences, report card conferences twice yearly and routine communication with parents. The implementation of the ParentSquare communication platform allow for families and all teachers to connect easily.

Center Road School strives to build deep and personal relationships with students so that they can be caring, responsible and safe individuals inside and out of school!

**LAKE STREET SCHOOL:            Ms. Tracy Duenzl, Principal**

Lake Street School is a dynamic school of students in grades K-5. Student learning in a positive and safe environment is our priority. The moment the students walk into the school until the busses pull away, we are all hands-on deck.

Our mission statement is the backbone of our school community: *We are proud to be a community of learners that treat each other with respect, take responsibility for our own learning, cooperate with others and strive for a safe and positive school for all.* Our positive school climate is the result of a school wide effort, led by our Climate committee, to promote respect, responsibility, cooperation and safety. We believe in doing what's best for our students by working together.

Our rich and rigorous curriculum drives student learning in the classroom, enhancing knowledge/skills outlined in the Vernon Public Schools' Vision of the Graduate:

collaboration, critical thinking, communication, resilience and responsibility. We monitor student progress and provide targeted intervention supports in English Language Arts, Mathematics and social and emotional needs. Technology is infused throughout the curriculum and available through the use of Smart Boards, chrome books, and iPads in the classroom, as well as a computer lab. Our classroom schedules include two WIN (What I Need) blocks during the day to meet the intervention and extension supports for students in Reading and Math. Classroom lessons are supplemented with field trips, to support the curriculum, such as the Belding Wildlife Center, CT Science Center and the New England Air museum. Our generous PTO provides in class lessons from High Touch, High Tech, the Lutz museum and poetry writing. Our school teams meet consistently throughout the year to monitor students' growth and ensure they are getting what they need academically, social/emotionally and family support with strong school attendance.

Lake Street School embraces diversity. We host our district wide Activities Based Learning program, for elementary students of Autism. These students learn how to function independently through communication, social skills, school jobs and interactive life functioning activities.

LSS includes a successful program for ESL students, enriching our school community, K-5. We embrace the opportunities to share our rich cultural experiences. Students benefit from a variety of activities to extend their learning, such as Band, afterschool intramurals, Chorus and Lego League. Students in fifth grade are recognized for Visual and Performing Arts at a Celebration of the Arts through the CT Association of Schools.

Students learn best when families and schools work together. Lake Street School benefits from a strong relationship with families who support our students in a variety of ways. Parents are welcome to enjoy lunch with their children, volunteer in the classroom, support learning from home. We celebrate the Veterans in our school community with an annual ceremony provided by the Lake Street staff. Our students perform in a winter concert and enjoy Fine Arts Night in the spring. Multicultural Night and VIP breakfasts are family favorites. Our active PTO sponsors several events for families throughout the year, including Ice Cream Socials, a Trunk or Treat and Family Fun Fair.

At Lake Street School, the feeling of success is doing your very best!

**MAPLE STREET SCHOOL:            Mr. Joshua Egan, Principal**

At Maple Street School, we believe that Every Student Matters and Every Moment Counts. We are committed to providing dynamic teaching and learning that is student-centered and based on our high-quality district curriculum in all academic areas. We advocate for the whole child and work relentlessly to ensure students' academic, social and emotional needs are being met.

Our focus at Maple Street School is to build long-lasting relationships within the school and the Vernon/Rockville community. We believe in working collaboratively with families and the community, as they are a valuable resource. Families and the community will be invited to or connected with Maple Street School throughout the year for various learning/engagement events. Some of our events include Literacy and Math Nights, Hopes and Dreams conferences, Trunk or Treat, Fine Arts Night, our annual Spelling Bee, Read Across America Day, Geography Bee, Polar Plunge, and Career Day. Each grade level also promotes family engagement through various events focusing on student achievement.

This year, Maple Street School turned 100 years old. On the actual birthday, January 2, 2024, all students were given a cupcake at their respective lunches and staff were welcomed back from break with a large birthday cake. Students and staff were treated to a slideshow that showed pictures and provided facts of Maple Street School throughout the past 100 years. During recess, we played games like Marbles and Jacks. On May 16, 2024, we held a party for the entire community. We set up a museum in our gym that provided insight into each decade complete with artifacts from the time period, held tours in the building and had refreshments. The event was attended by many students, staff, alumni, our mayor and state representatives.

We also offer activities at Maple Street School, focusing on fitness, the arts and leadership. We offer a wide-range of intramural activities that are run by Maple Street Staff. These activities include Cursive Club, Mural Club, Intramural Sports (volleyball, gymnastics, basketball), LEGO League, Comic Book Club and Board Games Club. These activities promote student well-being, collaboration, problem-solving and teamwork. We also offer Safety Patrol for Grade 5 students who demonstrate our core values each day. Our Safety Patrol members are building leaders who are tasked with many important roles. We are also fortunate to partner with ECHN, who support the building as well as families in the MSS community.

At Maple Street School, we are very proud of our academic accomplishments. Over the past few years, we have increased our school's performance levels in mathematics and reading. We attribute the increases in academic performances to our rigorous and engaging curriculum centered around the workshop model. This model supports individual goal setting, critical thinking, collaboration and problem solving. We continuously monitor student progress and provide targeted interventions to students who need extra support in reading, mathematics and social/emotional learning. Due to our growth in all academic areas, we were recognized by the Connecticut State Department of Education as a "School of Distinction". We are all very proud of this honor.

The focus on social-emotional learning is important to us at Maple Street School. Each grade level has a dedicated amount of time to teach Second Step, our social emotional curriculum, and focus on supporting students' social emotional learning through the use of the Zones of Regulation. To help foster relationships, each classroom has a Buddy Classroom. We also began a Friday Advisory program where all staff members work with a small group of students in various grade levels twice a month on activities that

support our social emotional learning goal as well as foster relationships and provide students a sense of belonging.

Maple Street School is a unique community school where all stakeholders come together to enrich the lives of our students. We pride ourselves in building partnerships with families, empowering students and supporting the social/emotional development of our students. By doing so, we are creating a future generation of productive, responsible twenty-first century citizens. At Maple Street School - Every Student Matters, Every Moment Counts.

**NORTHEAST SCHOOL:      Dr. Brenda Greene, Principal**

Northeast School is dedicated to fostering the success of all students across every aspect of their development—academically, socially, and emotionally. Our commitment to creating a safe, orderly, and purposeful learning environment is at the core of our educational philosophy. By maintaining a well-structured and intentional atmosphere, we enable students to concentrate fully on their work and personal growth, ensuring they have the best possible foundation for success.

We set high academic expectations and closely monitor the progress of each student. Personalized learning goals are created, and instructional approaches are adjusted accordingly. By tracking student progress, teachers can provide targeted support and ensure that each student has the opportunity to reach their full potential.

Northeast staff promotes effective communication with families, valuing the partnership between the school and home. Open communication channels are established to engage parents and guardians in the learning process. By involving families both inside and outside the classroom, we aim to create a collaborative environment that supports the educational journey of each student.

Our school's mantra, "Work Hard and Be Nice," captures the values and expectations of our learning environment. It encourages students to work diligently toward their academic goals while also fostering positive contributions to the school community.

Northeast School takes a holistic approach to education, focusing on the "whole child."

Our team of classroom teachers, paraeducators, psychologists, social workers, special education teachers, instructional specialists, office staff, building support staff, the principal, and families work together to support student development. By setting examples for one another and fostering a positive attitude, the team continuously strives for improvement while recognizing and celebrating successes.

Northeast School's dedication to excellence is evident in our achievements. We were recognized as a 2020 Blue Ribbon School, have been named a School of Distinction multiple times. These achievements confirm that we are on the right track in providing a learning environment where all students can achieve at high levels. We take pride in our collaborative partnership with families and the broader community, recognizing the importance of relationships in the educational process.

For the 2024-2025 school year, Northeast will welcome one new teacher in 5th grade, returning to two classrooms per grade level. We will make attendance a priority again this year, particularly targeting our incoming kindergarteners and first graders. The majority of our chronically absent students in the previous two years were in

kindergarten. Despite our increasing enrollment throughout the school year, we remain committed to providing a nurturing and challenging educational environment where students can thrive academically, socially, and emotionally. By employing effective strategies, fostering collaboration among staff and families, and celebrating achievements, we aim to bring out the best in each student and adult within our community.

**SKINNER ROAD SCHOOL:      Mr. Bryan Kerachsky, Principal**

Skinner Road School is a collaborative community of learners. Staff work alongside students to achieve their highest level of excellence. Our school fosters an environment where individuals feel comfortable, wanted, valued, accepted and safe. Our mission, in partnership with family and community, is to provide students with a strong educational foundation that will prepare them for success in life. We celebrate our diversity and inclusion of all students! Due to the work above, the State of Connecticut has recognized Skinner Road School as a 4-time School of Distinction since 2017. Looking at the way we have closed the achievement gap here at Skinner Road School, we have also earned the title of 2023 National Blue Ribbon School. This is a great honor for our school to be recognized by the U.S. Department of Education.

At Skinner Road School, we truly believe that our students can reach for the S.T.A.R.s. With our students being Safe, Truthful, Academic and Respectful, it gives them the best chance to be great contributors to the Vernon community. Our focused, hardworking staff ensure that our students have an opportunity to demonstrate these pillars daily, in and out of the classroom, becoming a school that cares for all!

Our School values the family partnerships we create and works to connect with parents both in the school and at home. Parents have several opportunities to meet with teachers, including our Hopes and Dreams Conferences, and are encouraged to request a meeting anytime they would like to discuss any issues. Through social media, we allow our parents a “sneak peek” at the work we are doing in the classroom and in the school. From celebrations, to the amazing work we are doing in the classrooms, we share our day as much as possible with our families. Teachers are also using communication apps, such as ParentSquare, to create a more personal level of interaction between families and school.

The Skinner Road School PTO meets monthly and encourages parents to become involved in school functions and seeks support to provide activities to students. The Skinner Road School PTO has been a huge support for students and staff. The PTO brings and supports many programs at the school including our popular Trunk or Treat event and Spring Fling Event. Thank you, PTO!!



Our Instructional Leadership Team (ILT) at SRS helps to coordinate all curriculum efforts, develop a school-wide mission and vision, and communicates at each grade level to implement our school improvement plan. Our School Improvement Plan continues to set high standards for all students with a targeted emphasis on all general instruction that occurs in the classroom for all students! Our teachers come together to collaborate to make sure our Skinner Road Mission Statement comes alive! At Skinner Road, School we Love. Care. Trust. Value. each and every one of our students and families!

**VERNON CENTER MIDDLE SCHOOL: Mr. David Caruso, Principal  
Mrs. Melissa Luke, Assistant Principal  
Mr. Michael Savignano, Asst. Principal**

### **Grades 6, 7, 8 Highlights**

This school year was filled with enriching activities and valuable experiences for our students, especially the incoming 6th graders. Our VCMS 101 class played a pivotal role in supporting these new students, helping them acclimate to middle school life with ease. The curriculum was designed with engaging and challenging learning activities, ensuring that students remained motivated and excited about their education.

We also fostered a strong sense of community through our Team Nights, where families were invited to meet with staff, explore the school, and enjoy a meal together. These events helped build a supportive network among parents, students, and teachers.

In addition to our community-building efforts, we established a beneficial partnership with Suburban Subaru. Their generous financial assistance significantly enhanced our science classes, providing more resources and opportunities for hands-on learning.

Extracurricular activities flourished this year, with many students participating in History Day, drama club, chorus, band, and various athletic teams. These programs not only allowed students to pursue their interests but also helped them develop teamwork and leadership skills.

Overall, this school year was marked by collaboration, community engagement, and a commitment to providing a dynamic and supportive learning environment for all students.

**ROCKVILLE HIGH SCHOOL: Mr. Jason Magao, Principal  
Mr. Daniel Pichette, Assistant Principal  
Ms. Katherine Howard-Bender, Asst. Principal**

### **OVERVIEW**

We had a great year at Rockville High School! We had 234 total graduates for the class of 2024. Our programs thrived and many students were honored from athletics, ASTE, creative writing, and our music programs. Our mantra of Our House where we Work

Hard, Play Hard, and Own It, continued to drive our core beliefs. Rockville High School graduates earned more than \$300,000.00 in scholarships and were accepted into many distinguished institutions to further their academic careers.

The Rockville High School Community stays committed to providing a safe and respectful environment where all members are dedicated to lifelong learning. Through active collaboration with families and community members, we will ensure that our students graduate as productive and engaged members of a dynamic, global 21st-century society. We believe rigorous and meaningful academic and extra-curricular programs afford all students the opportunity to become Responsible, Open-Minded, Critical and Knowledgeable Thinkers.

### **SCHOOL CLIMATE FAMILY ENGAGEMENT**

Rockville High School continues to thrive with the support of families who constantly show up for our students and their endeavors. We hosted a plethora of athletic events, musical performances, clubs, open house events, drama productions, and held our 2<sup>nd</sup> annual ROCK the Arts evening in the spring, which was a major success.

### **STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT**

- Seniors Aleksandra Elcsics, and Katherine Larson were recognized for their artistic and musical talents at the CAS Awards ceremony.
- Junior, Morgyn Farina, was awarded the RIT Art & Design Award for her achievements in the visual arts.
- The Rockville HS Marching RAM Band competed and placed as runners up for the USBANDS Division 2A CT State Marching Band State Championship held at Rockville High School on Saturday, October 28<sup>th</sup> 2023
- The Rockville HS Marching RAM Band competed and placed 5<sup>th</sup> (out of 23 bands from the USA) at the USBANDS National Championships for division 2A in Allentown PA on Saturday, November 4<sup>th</sup> 2023
- Rockville HS Musical Theater Company students Dianaris Alvarez and Lorelei Hutchings earned Halo Awards on Thursday, May 30<sup>th</sup> 2024 at the 45<sup>th</sup> annual Halo Awards for their performances in Mamma Mia.
- Through the fall, winter, and spring sports seasons, we had 66 all-conference athletes and 14 all-state athletes.
- Our girls' soccer, boys' soccer, football, girls' volleyball, e-sports, boys' basketball, girls ice hockey, baseball, and boys' volleyball teams all qualified for the state tournaments.
- Individual athletes qualified for state competition in the sports of cross country, girls' swimming, indoor track, wrestling, and outdoor track.
- Several athletes competed as individuals in New England and National meets in the sports of indoor track, wrestling, and outdoor track.
- Our cheerleading team hosted a competition and participated in the state competition.
- Boys' outdoor track and field team won the NCCC conference championship for the third straight year.
- Our football team advanced to the state championship game.

- Our wrestling team won the conference tournament championship.
- 18 Seniors signed on the play a sport at the collegiate level.

### **NEW INITIATIVES**

- The Art Department was approved to teach two additional ECE classes, Digital Arts I and 2D Studio Design I and II.
- During the 2023/2024 school year, the RHS music department held its inaugural AP Music Theory course with great success as students scored in the 3-5 range on the AP exam.
- The Family and Consumer Science Department's Early Childhood Education program successfully launched a summer Transitional Kindergarten for the Town of Vernon headed by Kristen Piscottano. Additionally, her current Pre-K room secured Sykes Funding for a complete overhaul.
- The Technology Education Department updated curriculum in 4 courses to align with current standards and better prepare students for ECE and dual enrollment opportunities in the department.
- The School Counseling Department participated in the FAFSA Challenge hosted by the CT SDE for a second year in a row. As part of their efforts, FAFSA completion events were hosted for both families and students. Grant monies were also used to provide students with incentives to complete their FAFSA. At the end of the year the department achieved a 62% FAFSA completion rate for the Class of 2024, exceeding the state completion average of 57%.
- The district applied for and received a grant to review and expand our Dual Enrollment offerings. The School Counseling Department collaborated with Central Office Administration and RHS Department Heads to review and expand our Dual Enrollment offerings. For the 24-25 school year, our UConn articulated courses will increase from 20 to 25, ECSU articulated courses will increase from five to 12 and we will be offering one SCSU articulated course.

### **CELEBRATIONS**

- The Art and World Language Department celebrated students artistic, cultural and musical talents at RHS with the second annual Rock the Arts event.
- The Art Department collaborated with Arts Center East in order to showcase student artwork at a public gallery space in Vernon
- The RHS Marching Band hosted the USBANDS New England States competition at Rockville High School on Saturday, October 28th 2023. Over 14 bands from around New England attended to compete for their respective division and state championships
- The RHS Musical Theater Company put on their second annual musical: Mamma Mia, March 1-3 2023. Over 1300 audience members attended the run of the musical.
- The RHS Musical Theater Company earned 11 nominations from the annual Halo Awards Foundation from Waterbury CT.
- The RHS Choir competed in the Fantastic Festivals competition at Middletown HS in April 2024 earning a GOLD rating.

- The RHS Band and Jazz Band both earned Excellent ratings at the Music in the Parks competition in Jackson NJ in April 2024.
- The RHS Marching RAM Band, following a successful first season under their new director, has continued to grow and competed as a group 2A size band with 38 members. The band and color guard continue to grow with the band projecting to be a group 3 size next fall.

## APPENDIX

### 2023 Vernon Public Schools: Reaching for the Next Level of Educational Excellence

Traditionally, during this time of the year, everyone looks forward to the New Year by making resolutions and striving to make the world a better place to live. 2023 has created “different challenges” in all our lives as we strive to overcome the long-term effects of the Covid-19 global health pandemic. We had to re-focus on how we were going to create an optimal learning environment in all our classrooms for Vernon students. Our efforts became maintaining high standards of teaching and learning and managing the economic factors of personnel and staffing in our schools.

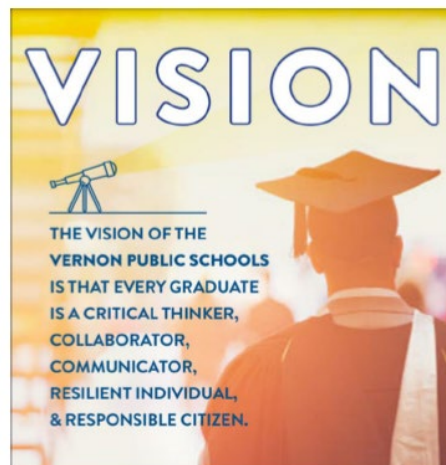
When I think about the Vernon Public Schools, I always remember this quote from John Wooden, legendary basketball coach at UCLA, *"When you improve a little each day, eventually big things occur... Not tomorrow, not the next day, but eventually a big gain is made. Don't look for the big, quick improvement. Seek the small improvement one day at a time. That's the only way it happens- and when it happens, it lasts."* This year's district accomplishments, school accolades, and student achievements, of which we can be proud to celebrate, are a result of the small improvements made one day at a time.

Today's students have different academic, social, and emotional needs than those of earlier generations. Their needs are continually changing, and schools need to adapt. To transform the Vernon Public Schools, we must take steps toward the next level of educational excellence. These steps are grounded in the district's core beliefs to: *advocate a “whole child” approach to student learning, maximize student performance and set high expectations, and integrate family and community with the education system.* These core beliefs drive our work to reach educational excellence!

Despite all the challenges in 2023, here are some impressive accomplishments this past year:

- ✓ In September 2023, U.S. Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona recognized Vernon's Skinner Road School as one of the [National Blue Ribbon Schools](#) for 2023. The recognition is based on a school's overall academic performance and progress in closing achievement gaps among student subgroups. The coveted National Blue Ribbon Schools award (given to only 353 schools in the nation) affirms the hard work of our educators, families, and communities in creating a safe and welcoming school where students master challenging and engaging content. Congratulations to students, parents, teachers, staff, and administration at **Skinner Road School** for their efforts and accomplishments in **being named a 2023 “Blue Ribbon School.”** The National Blue Ribbon School recognition is one of the highest accolades in the field of education. This is the second time in 4 years (Northeast School in 2020) that a Vernon School has received this recognition. This award is a testament to the efforts made to improve teaching and learning with the result of meeting the needs of our students at Skinner Road School. We are proud of you and this accomplishment.
- ✓ The best indicator of student learning is Connecticut's Next Generation Accountability System Results, which is a broad set of 12 indicators that help tell the story of how well a school is preparing its students for success in college, careers, and life. School Accountability Results are similar to a student's report card – looking at the overall growth in one's education compared to others. The CT State Department of Education released the 2022-2023 Accountability Results for Schools. **Vernon earned 72.4 points, in comparison to the CT State Average 69.3.** Vernon ranked #1 among the 33 Alliance Districts in Connecticut. In addition, Vernon ranked #1 in results in its District Reference Group (DRG-G). This was an amazing accomplishment considering the past 4 years of school disruption due to the COVID-19 health pandemic and school shutdowns.
- ✓ Based on the Connecticut Next Generation Accountability results, schools with significant growth and achievement are deemed “Schools of Distinction” and represent the top 10% of all CT schools. For the past four ranking years, **Northeast School** was deemed a “School of Distinction” with this year being for its high growth (high needs students) in English Language Arts (ELA). This year, **Maple Street School** was deemed a “School of Distinction” for its high growth (all students) in ELA and Math and for its high growth (high needs students in both ELA and Math).

- ✓ For the second time in four years, U.S. News & World Report magazine has rated Vernon's Lake Street School as one of the best in Connecticut. Long known for rating colleges and hospitals, in 2021 U.S. News began ranking elementary and middle schools across the nation. **Lake Street School** was 60th out of 560 schools in 2021 and for 2024 is ranked 54th of 545 Connecticut elementary schools. The magazine's ratings are based on math and reading proficiency as measured by state assessments as well as how students perform compared to expectations. Lake Street students performed "well above expectations" in math and reading.
- ✓ The 2023 Smarter Balanced (SBA) Results showed that the Vernon Public Schools outperformed the CT State Average in all three areas -- English Language Arts (ELA), Mathematics and Science. Out of the 33 CT Alliance Districts, Vernon students' scores were first (#1) in both ELA and Math results. In our DRG (District Reference Group), out of the K-12 districts, Vernon's results were #1 in Mathematics, #1 in English Language Arts, and #2 in science.
- ✓ By June of 2023, 260 Rockville High School students received college credit through their academic studies in the 2022-2023 year. Students either passed Advanced Placement exams, completed University of Connecticut or Eastern Connecticut State University Early College Experience courses, or completed an articulated class with Manchester or Middlesex Community College. Of these RHS students earning college credits, 101 were members of the graduating Class of 2023. That is 55% of the graduating class. The credits earned by all RHS students during the 2022-2023 school year translate to a total of \$715,800 in savings on college tuition and fees. In addition, 78 seniors were awarded community scholarships totaling \$396,310.
- ✓ Over 77% of the Rockville High School Graduates (Class of 2023) are furthering their education at the college level. Some of the colleges our students are attending include Haverford College, North Carolina State University, University of Arizona, Wheaton College, Roanoke University, Fairfield University, Bentley College, Quinnipiac University, Savannah College of Art & Design, and the University of Connecticut.
- ✓ Thirty-three (33) Rockville High School students were winners in the 2023 Scholastic Art and Writing Awards presented by the Alliance for Young Artists and Writers. RHS students received 59 awards this year (49 in 2022), including 8 Gold Keys, 23 Silver Keys, and 28 Honorable Mentions, the highest number of any participating high school in the state of Connecticut. Clarissa Halpryn received a 2023 American Voices Nomination for Best in Show.
- ✓ The Rockville High School Creative Writers had 13 platinum published award winners, 11 gold award winners, 20 silver award winners, and 22 honorable mentions in UCONN's 2023 Connecticut Student Writer Magazine! RHS dominated with 13 out of 30 published pieces in the grade 9-12 categories (a record). RHS had winners in every category (fiction, poetry, non-fiction) and our students won more awards than any other school in the State of Connecticut.





- ✓ Eighteen (18) Seniors from the RHS Class of 2023 signed up to play a sport in college. They include Joey Christian, Football at Worcester State University; JT Dwire, Football at Ursinus College; Emily Fredrickson, Cheerleading at the University of New Haven; Jordan Galica, Soccer at the University of New Haven; Hason Green, Football at Nichols College; Lauren Haddad, Track & Field at Bryant University; Chloe Keane, Soccer at Western New England University; Ava Kristoff, Track & Field at Wheaton College; Weston LaBrecque, Track & Field at Marist College; Brooke Landry, Soccer at St. Joseph University; Malachi Mapp, Football at Central Connecticut State University; Tori Mitchell, Lacrosse at Georgian Court University; Lexi Real, Softball at Springfield College; Mandi Rivard, Lacrosse at University of Hartford; Arielle Shivers, Track & Field at Central Connecticut State University; Anaya Tolton, Basketball at Westfield State University; Cam Washington, Track & Field at Iona University; and Luke Woodward, Soccer at Salve Regina University.
- ✓ E-mail from a former Vernon Parent: “My daughter attended Center Rd last year and I just wanted to offer some feedback on our experience. We unfortunately had to transfer to a different school system this year because we had to move to a bigger home. I tried my hardest to stay in Vernon because our experience was so phenomenal with Center Rd. My daughter has been in another school system prior to attending Center Rd and the differences were astounding- from the pick-up and drop off process which was managed so securely (parents had to show ID and kids were released to parents only when they show up, believe me that is not the case at our current and former school) to no one being allowed in the building during school hours for what I assume to be security reasons, to her teacher Ms. Smith being absolutely amazing. I commend the Vernon school system. The communication between teachers and parents was also excellent. I was very sad that we couldn’t stay, and she attend VCMS. I just wanted to offer that feedback because it’s clear the school system is being run efficiently and safely and it seems there isn’t enough positive feedback these days.”
- ✓ In June 2023, the district conducted an ‘end of the year survey’ of over 600 people in the community and received the following results: 87.2% of the people rated the Overall Education in Vernon a grade of “A” or “B.” A majority (93.7%) say they receive favorable services from the teaching staff in our schools. Additionally, 88.1% of the respondents say the Vernon Public School District is heading in the right direction based on the mission and vision statement in terms of educating their children.
- ✓ The Vernon Board of Education won the Bonnie B. Carney Award of Excellence for Educational Communications for their special project “Board Member Handbook” at the 2023 CABE (Connecticut Association of Boards of Education) Convention. The Vernon BOE also received two honorable mentions under special projects for the ‘Billboards’ and the ‘School Brochures’
- ✓ The Vernon Board of Education won the CABE (Connecticut Association of Boards of Education) **Board of Distinction Award in 2023**. The CABE Board Awards are designed to recognize boards that provide effective leadership to their districts through the use of good practices. This program acknowledges the importance of school board members and superintendents working together as effective teams. This is the eighth year (2016-2023) in a row that Vernon has won this Level II Award, which is the highest bestowed by CABE. Vernon was one of only 17 school districts in Connecticut to receive this prestigious leadership award in 2023.

*“The function of education is to teach one to think intensively and to think critically. Intelligence plus character – that is the goal of true education.”* This quote by Martin Luther King, Jr. has never been truer than in 2024. It is more imperative today than ever that we all embrace life-long education for all children and adults. Learning is the key to success in life.

Honestly, I did not want to add this to this year’s accomplishments; however, this achievement cannot be attained by one individual and should be considered a shared collective award. In November, I was named the 2024 Connecticut Superintendent of the Year by the Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents (CAPSS). Serving as Vernon’s superintendent since October 2015, the focus has been

working closely with parents, teachers, staff, the Board of Education, and town leaders to improve Vernon Public Schools and steadily increase student performance in measurable ways. That work has shown results. In addition, in March, I was named the 2023 Outstanding School Superintendent by the University of Connecticut's Neag School of Education Alumni Board. These awards are shared with the students, teachers, families, staff, administration, Board of Education, town, and the entire Vernon community at large.

As you can see, the Vernon Public Schools has achieved much in 2023. The above accomplishments clearly demonstrate the potential the Vernon Public Schools have to be one of the best districts in Connecticut. Together - students, parents, families, teachers, staff members, administrators, and board members work towards educational excellence every day, and make our district a better place for all children. I am proud to be a part of this culture and I can say that **2023 was a year that reached the next level of educational excellence** for Vernon's students. Thank you for your continued support and confidence in our school district.