

VERNON PUBLIC SCHOOLS



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2017: Another Step Forward for the Vernon Public Schools

During this time of the year, everyone looks forward to the New Year by making resolutions and striving to make the world around them a better place to live. This time of reflection has inspired me to think about making positive changes in our school district to improve overall student achievement. This is best accomplished by setting high expectations for student learning through relevant curriculum and a high quality teaching and support staff. High standards of teaching and learning will create an optimal educational environment for all students in Vernon.

As we begin the 2018 year, one cannot help, but to reflect on the past year. When I started as Superintendent of Schools, the Board Chair said to me, "we want to take the Vernon Public Schools to the next level of educational excellence." At first, I thought that meant that Vernon would no longer be identified as an Alliance District, however, over the past two years; I have found the educational potential in Vernon to be huge! The faculty and staff in this district have the capability to transform the Vernon Public Schools into one of the best districts in the State of Connecticut.

The key to success is creating systems and structures for district transformation, not reform! Today's students have different academic, social and emotional needs than those of our generation. Their needs are continually changing and schools need to adapt to that change. In order to transform the Vernon Public Schools, we must take steps towards the next level of educational excellence. These steps are grounded in the district's core beliefs; *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 towards educational excellence!

Here are some of the accomplishments that we are proud of this past year:

- An indicator of student achievement is the percent of growth - students who meet grade level mastery in Math & English Language Arts (ELA) in Grades 3 through 8. One measure of this indicator is the Smarter Balanced Assessment. The percent of students meeting mastery (i.e. Level 3 or above) on SBAC: the State increase was -1.4% in English Language Arts and +1.6% in Mathematics. Using the same model for student achievement, the **Vernon Public Schools increase was +5.1% in English Language Arts and +8.7% in Mathematics in Grades 3 through 8.** These results demonstrate positive student success in Vernon Schools.
- Over the past two years, Vernon has seen significant growth in our student achievement scores as measured by SBAC. This indicator is the percent of students, who meet grade level mastery in Math & English Language Arts (ELA) in Grades 3 through 8. Using a growth model for

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student achievement, in the past two years, the State increase was +1.8% in English Language Arts and +4.5% in Mathematics. **Using a same (2 year) growth model for student achievement, the Vernon Public School increase was +10.1% in English Language Arts and +13.9% in Math.** These results demonstrate sustained positive student success in Vernon Schools.

- Rockville High School (Class of 2018) student scores on the SATs (Scholastic Aptitude Test) increased by 108 points from Fall 2015 to Spring 2017 (in Grades 10th → 11th). Rockville HS (Class of 2019) student scores increased 69 points on the SATs from Fall 2015 to the Fall 2016. The SATs have been re-designed to a skills-based achievement test for students to be college ready. The average national increase in scores over one year is 35 to 40 points.
- Sixty-eight (68) Rockville High School students were winners in the 2017 Scholastic Art and Writing Awards presented by the Alliance for Young Artists and Writers. RHS students received 122 awards this year, including 14 Gold Keys, 47 Silver Keys, and 61 Honorable Mentions, the highest number of any participating high school in the State of Connecticut. Two (2) RHS students also received a 2017 Gold Writing Portfolio Award. Students whose works merit a national award are considered for scholarships, publication opportunities, and national exhibition.
- In the 2016-2017 school year, 224 Rockville HS students received college credit through their academic studies in Vernon. Students either passed an Advanced Placement exams, UConn Early College Experience courses, Goodwin College courses, or articulated classes with Manchester Community College. Getting college credits in high school helps the pathway towards a meaningful post-secondary experience. Of these 224 students, 120 were members of the graduating Class of 2017. That is 63% of last year's senior class.
- Over 80% of the Rockville HS Graduates (Class of 2017) are furthering their education at the college level. Some of the colleges our students were accepted to include: University of Pennsylvania, Boston College, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, PENN State University, University of Connecticut, Clark University, University of Delaware, US Coast Guard Academy, Rhode Island School of Design, and Fashion Institute of Technology.
- The Vernon Public School District was awarded a \$377,000 grant for family and community engagement through the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving. This grant award has enhanced our efforts to build strong connections and relationships between parents and teachers at local schools. The district-wide plan has created a centralized student registration office, hired family liaisons at each school, and established community partnerships to promote family engagement.
- In June 2017, the district conducted an end of the year survey of over 500 people in the community and received the following results: 85.6% of the people rated the Overall Education in Vernon a grade of "A" or "B". Most people (89.4%) say they have effective home communications with their schools. Additionally, 84.5% of the respondents say the Vernon Public Schools is heading in the right direction in terms of educating their children.
- 2017 saw the completion of many building projects and capital improvements, through Town of Vernon Bonding, Alliance Grant Funding, and our Capital Non-Recurring Funds, in the amount of approximately \$1 million dollars for our schools. At Rockville High School, renovations were completed in the Food Lab and the TV Studio, along with the painting of thirteen (13) classrooms. Vernon Center Middle School's gymnasium floor was resurfaced while new

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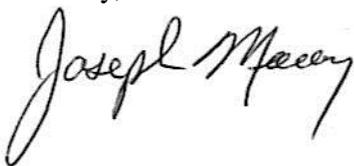
bleachers and basketball hoops were installed. The parking lots at Rockville High School and Lake Street School were expanded to accommodate more parking for community members. Center Road School received new heating boilers and Maple Street School had its shingled roof re-done along with new classroom renovations. These projects were successfully completed in collaboration with the Town of Vernon and the State of Connecticut to maximize efficiencies.

- The Connecticut Interlocal Risk Management Agency (CIRMA) presented the Town of Vernon and Vernon Public Schools with its 2017 *Excellence in Risk Management Award* in the category of *Sustained Risk Management Programs*. Working collaboratively the Town and Public Schools have created a culture of risk management. An enterprise risk management approach was established, and a governance framework and multiple programs were put in place to identify, address, and monitor exposures and losses. The total cost of risk savings is over \$3million annually.
- The Vernon Board of Education received a Communication Award from CABE (Connecticut Association of Boards of Education). The top award was for Special Projects – the Vernon Public Schools Communications Plan use of a Billboard. Monthly messages are highlighted on this billboard located on the corner of Talcottville Road and Loveland Hill Road. These awards exemplify the district's mission of open communication and community outreach.
- The Vernon Board of Education won the CABE (Connecticut Association of Boards of Education) **Board of Distinction Award in 2017**. The CABE Board Recognition 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 second year (2016) that Vernon has won this Level II Award and was one of only 9 school districts in Connecticut to receive such a prestigious leadership award.

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.*"

As you can see, Vernon is taking the necessary steps to move our school system to the next level of educational excellence. The above accomplishments clearly demonstrate the potential in the Vernon Public Schools to be one of the best districts in Connecticut. Together - students, parents, guardians, 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 **2017 was another step forward** for the Vernon Public Schools. Thank you.

Sincerely,



Joseph Macary, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools
Town of Vernon, Connecticut

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