

September 29, 2023

Dear Parents and Guardians,

It is with great pleasure that I welcome you to a new and exciting start to the school year. It's amazing to think we are already wrapping up the month of September. Despite a few challenges with scheduling due to the heat and the rain, we are off to a smooth start offering a wide variety of school programming and after school activities. On behalf of our staff, I want to thank you for your continued support. The positive energy throughout the buildings as we welcomed our students back is an experience that never gets old.

Each year, we open school with a Convocation ceremony, the highlight of which is the announcement of our teacher of the year. I am proud to share that this year's teacher of the year, Christy Cestone, was honored for her excellence in working with our students. Christy is a Speech and Language Pathologist at Henry James Memorial School and has served our community and schools for many years with both passion and dedication. Her message was centered on working with students to find their voice and helping them to realize how powerful that voice can be. Christie's positive message engaged us all as she spoke of being inspired by the effort her students display and being super motivated to inspire them to reach their full potential.

One of the pillars of our foundation as an organization is teacher collaboration. During the opening of school, we spoke of promoting a strong sense of belonging through effective communication and collaborative practices. I believe that recommitting to and cultivating Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) in our schools is key to fostering a culture of lifelong learning among our staff. Collaboration lives in both our teaching standards and in our Vision of the Graduate as one of six core competencies. By providing the time and support for our staff to collaborate, we can tap into our shared reservoir of knowledge, skills, and experiences, deepening our learning and pushing our practice as educators. By engaging in ongoing collaborative professional development, we invest in both our staff and in the future of our students.

Now that we have settled into the routines and expectations of the school year, both the fun and the hard work really begin! In Simsbury, we believe in a standards-based curriculum to support all students achieving at high levels. As we partner with families, it is important that you know and can access information about our curriculum. I am happy to share that district leaders developed a tool that provides families with quick access to curriculum overviews by content and grade level, K-12. Early next month, principals will send a link that will direct you to the curriculum section of our website, where you can access this important information. We are excited to share this good work with you.

We are pleased to share that the construction and renovation project at Latimer Lane School continues to move along, and the end of Phase I, the creation of the new spaces, is nearing completion. We anticipate those new spaces will be occupied by students at the end of the

calendar year. Those areas include new classrooms, a new gym, cafeteria and kitchen. At that time, Phase II, the renovation of half of the original building, will begin. During that phase, the upper and main hallway of the building will be closed while classrooms are renovated and the new library media center is created. I encourage the community to take a drive by and see the amazing progress that has already taken place or to view a [video](#) of the work as of September 5th.

As of this writing, installation of the new SHS bleachers and press box is nearly complete. We took the old bleachers down last February to allow the most time possible for construction. However, shipping delays, labor shortages, and uncooperative weather all conspired to push the project beyond its original August completion deadline. The goal now is to see our new bleachers filled with fans at the upcoming October 6<sup>th</sup> homecoming game.

Welcome back and have a wonderful school year!

Sincerely,

Matt Curtis  
Superintendent of Schools