LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Woodstock Public Schools celebrate historic year of achievement

To the Editor:

Woodstock Public Schools is celebrating a year of significant academic progress

and statewide recognition, reflecting the work of students, educators, staff, families and the community.

Across the district, proficiency increased by 13 percentage points in math, 8 points in English language arts and 9 points in science. Woodstock Elementary School (WES) earned its first-ever School of Distinction recognition. It was one of only 16 schools in Connecticut to receive all five distinction designations, including recognition for performance in the state's top 10 percent. For context, there are well over 1,000 schools in the state of Connecticut.

The statewide results included 136 School of Distinction designations, with only two awarded to middle schools.

Woodstock Middle School (WMS) achieved its highest accountability index to date, rising from 68 to 78.9, an increase of 10.9 points. Its math growth indicator reached 81.3 percent, just 0.53 points below the 81.83 percent distinction threshold.

WMS was not eligible for a distinction this cycle because assessment participation in the prior year fell below the state's 95 percent requirement. The school met the participation threshold this year, addressing that eligibility barrier for future consideration, subject to all other state criteria. I have no doubt WMS will be there! They have exceptional staff at all levels.

This past year we adopted a mindset of growth for all students in our schools. We don't expect perfection; we expect at least one year's growth in an academic year. I believe the numbers speak for themselves:

In just one year, Woodstock Public Schools made extraordinary gains in student growth across every measure. In 2024–2025, WPS ranked 170th in Connecticut for ELA growth among all students; by 2025–2026, it had risen to 10th. For high-needs students, (those who qualify for free or reduced-price lunch, receive special education services, and/or are multilingual learners,) WPS rose from 146th to 7th in ELA growth. In math, the district climbed from 115th to 5th for all students and from 89th to 5th for high-needs students. These results reflect a remarkable transformation in a single year and show what focused, sustained work can accomplish for every learner.

It was an honor to be invited by the CT State Commissioner of Education and the Chief Performance Officer to present on what is working in the Woodstock Public Schools. Participating in four events on school and district improvement was tremendous. The Chief Performance Officer noted, "Woodstock has now exceeded pre-pandemic academic achievement levels on the district performance index."

I am a person of my word, and I believe that when we create a budget, it must be tied to measurable gains in student outcomes. Too often in education, more is asked for and less is accomplished. When we ask our community to invest in our schools, we owe them evidence that those investments are improving results for students.

What I provided is not survey data, one's feelings, perception data, or data from focus groups. This is quantifiable data corroborating what we are doing in the Woodstock Public Schools is working.

I believe that suggesting test scores do not matter is like saying batting averages do not matter in baseball or that lab results are not important to a physician. Without assessments, we have no consistent measure against which to compare outcomes, identify needs or determine whether our work is having the intended effect.

I believe that students deserve to read at grade level by the end of third grade and to know their math facts with automaticity, so they have a strong foundation for more complex mathematics. Early intervention andhigh expectations are essential. When students receive timely support and are challenged to reach ambitious goals, they almost always rise to meet those expectations.

Students also need a rich and balanced school experience, including opportunities to participate in sports, clubs, music, band, art, theater and other activities, along with less time on electronic devices. Even incremental academic growth can give students a sense of accomplishment, confidence and self-efficacy. That confidence can encourage continued academic progress and carry into athletics, the arts and other parts of school and in life.

It is my belief that challenges build grit, determination and resilience, qualities students need in school, at work and throughout life. Woodstock's results mark an important milestone and a foundation for continued growth, with high expectations, early support and measurable goals guiding the work ahead.

These accomplishments belong to all of Woodstock. To our students: your hard work, curiosity, and perseverance inspire us. To our teachers, our leaders, and staff: your belief in every student and your daily dedication make this progress possible. To our families and community: your partnership, encouragement, and confidence in our schools make a lasting difference. To our Board of Education, your support and countless hours of volunteerism make leadership and high-quality classroom instruction possible. Special thanks as well to our town leaders for the support they provide to our schools.

Thanks to all departments, our nurses, our paraeducators, our front office staff, and our cafeteria staff. Also, thanks to WEF, our PTO, parent volunteers, our retired teachers who always give back at Quasset School, and for all who gave up time to coach and support our students because it makes a difference. Thanks to our first responders for always keeping our schools safe and looking out for us. Also, a special thanks to WINY for always allowing us a platform to tell our story every fourth Friday of the month at 9am. And thanks to the Woodstock Villager for always printing our stories. We appreciate everyone!

This is a moment to celebrate, and a springboard for even greater things. We have proven what we can accomplish when we come together with a shared purpose. With our students' potential, our staff's commitment, and our community's support, the sky is truly the limit for Woodstock Public Schools!

And just like every high performing organization, I had a teacher and administrator stop me to tell me there is no reason why we can't add another 10 percent! I agree completely.

Christopher Roche
Superintendent
Woodstock Public Schools

Killingly High School Weekly Sports Wrap-Up

Field Hockey

Killingly fell to Stonington, 7-0, in a hard-fought matchup on Oct. 27. Jaynie Macquarrie made 13 saves in goal, while Trinity Eldridge provided strong defensive play throughout the game. Killingly continued to compete and work hard through all four quarters.

Girls Soccer

Last Tuesday night under the lights, the Killingly Girls Soccer Team hosted Woodstock and celebrated Senior Night, honoring captains Gracie West and McKenna Mulvey for their dedication and leadership.

The Trailblazers wasted no time getting on the board as Adalyn Malarkey found the back of the net less than five minutes into the match off an assist from Nina Purcell. Just two minutes later, Woodstock answered to even the score at 1-1.

The teams headed into halftime tied, but Killingly's defense stood strong throughout the second half. Led by Lylah Connetti, along with Kate Crowley, Lianna Hutchinson, and Layla Raymond. Killingly finishes the regular season with a 10-4-2 record.

On Oct. 31, Killingly hosted Montville in the ECC Tournament Division 2 Semifinal. Montville got on the board first. A little over 6 minutes into the game. Killingly immediately answered just 10 seconds later with a goal by Kezlee Morrarty and the assist from Oliva Cabral. Kezlee Morrarty scored her second goal of the game on an assist from Nina Purcell 4 minutes later to give Killingly a 2-1 lead. Madison San Souci added a goal with an assist from Kezlee Morrarty for Killingly with 16:18 left in the 1st half. Five minutes later Killingly extended it's lead to 4-1 on a goal from Gracie West with the assist from Kezlee Morrarty. Montville added a goal with 1:05 left in the 1st half. Both teams went scoreless in the 2nd half and Killingly came away with a 4-2 win and a trip to the ECC Tournament Division 2 finals on Monday at Bacon Academy to take on Windham. Season Record: 11-4-2.

On Monday afternoon, Nov. 2, the girls captured the ECC Division II Championship with a dominant 5-1 victory over Windham.

The scoring started less than five minutes into the match when Kezlee Morrarty finished a through ball from Kate Crowley to give the Trailblazers an early 1-0 lead. Shortly after, Gracie West found the back of the net off an assist from Adalyn Malarkey. Just two minutes later, Gracie struck again, finishing a cross from Adalyn to put Killingly ahead 3-0 heading into halftime.

The Trailblazers continued their strong play in the second half. Adalyn Malarkey added a goal of her own off an assist from Kezlee Morrarty, and Kezlee capped off the championship performance with her second goal of the match. Windham's lone goal came on a penalty kick. With the win, the ECC Division II Champions improve their record to 12-4-2.

Day Kimball launches Project ASSERT to expand substance use support services in Emergency department

PUTNAM — Day Kimball Hospital has launched Project ASSERT, a new emergency department program that connects patients experiencing substance use concerns with education, treatment options, recovery resources and community-based support services beginning the moment they seek emergency care.

Funded through the Connecticut Opioid Settlement Fund, and administered by the Connecticut Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS), the program is designed to reach patients affected by opioid use disorders during a critical window when they may be most open to seeking help.

In its first five weeks, the program completed 43 consults with 38 patients, resulting in three inpatient treatment placements, six outpatient treatment placements, four detox placements and two medication for opioid use disorder (MOUD) interventions.

The initial results demonstrate both the need for these services in the community and the value of meeting patients where they are. Every connection represents an opportunity to help someone take the next step toward recovery and improved health.

"Project ASSERT allows us to meet patients where they are, at a moment when they may be most open to considering treatment," said Kyle Kramer, DKH CEO. "These early numbers tell us there is a real need in our community, and they tell us this approach works. Every one of these connections is a chance to change someone's path, and that's exactly the kind of care we want to provide. Our goal is to reduce the barriers, provide education, and help patients take the next step toward recovery and improved health."

How it works

Health promotion advocates (HPAs) work alongside emergency department staff to screen patients for substance misuse and connect them with resources tailored to their needs, including:

Treatment programs

Access to primary care, counseling and community-based recovery support

MOUD, including FDA-approved medications such as Suboxone, buprenorphine and methadone

Education on safer choices, overdose prevention and harm reduction

"Substance use disorders are treatable medical conditions, and recovery looks different for every person," said Steven Wexler, MD, FAAEM, DKH HPA Site Champion and medical director of the Day Kimball Hospital Emergency Department. "By connecting patients with resources during an emergency department visit, we can help bridge the gap between immediate care and long-term recovery."

The team

In addition to Dr. Wexler, the DKH Project ASSERT team includes:

Vanessa Brown, MD, JD, FACEP, FAAEM, Chief Medical Officer and Vice President, Medical Affairs and Quality

Christine Collins, LPC, ED Grant Supervisor

Crystal Lanning, MSOL, RN, HPA Supervisor

Emily Laprade, Health Promotion Advocate

Courtney Peltier, Health Promotion Advocate

Getting help

Patients can speak with a member of the DKH Project ASSERT team during an emergency department visit to learn more about treatment options and recovery resources.

Anyone who uses drugs alone and is seeking immediate overdose prevention support can call SafeSpot's free, confidential, 24/7 Overdose Spotting Hotline at 1-800-972-0590.

About Day Kimball Health

Day Kimball Health is a nonprofit community healthcare system composed of Day Kimball Hospital, Day Kimball Medical Group, Day Kimball Health at Home, and healthcare centers in Danielson, Dayville, Plainfield, and Putnam. Its service area includes Northeast Connecticut as well as nearby Massachusetts and Rhode Island communities. Day Kimball Health's comprehensive network employs more than 1,000 staff, including nearly 300 associated, highly skilled physicians, surgeons, and specialists. Its website is daykimball.org.

Paws Cat Shelter hosting can and bottle drive

PUTNAM — Paws Cat Shelter is holding a Can and Bottle Drive on Saturday, Nov. 7 from 11 a.m. – 2 p.m. at the shelter located at 74 School St. in Putnam. Please separate two-liter bottles. Pet food and donations are always welcome and greatly appreciated.

Paws is a non-profit, all volunteer organization caring for the cats of our communities. For more info or to make a monetary donation, contact Paws at 860-315-1228.



Courtesy

The Connecticut Conference of Municipalities hosted more than 1,150 attendees for a two-day event featuring informative workshops, interactive discussions, and networking opportunities. Local government leaders from across the state gathered to explore municipal products and services, as well as attend sessions on effective municipal governance. Additionally, Economic Development Director Mary Ann Chinatti achieved certification as a Municipal Policy Leader during the conference. Pictured are Selectman Mike Bogdanski of Putnam, District Clerk Stefani Bellavance, Deputy Mayor Scott Pempek, Town Administrator Elaine Sistare, Economic Development Director Mary Ann Chinatti, HR Director Mariah Clifford, and Economic Development Coordinator Sue Ramos.