



Danbury Digest

District News & Highlights

Winter 2020

Superintendent's message

Dear Danbury Staff, Parents and Supporters,

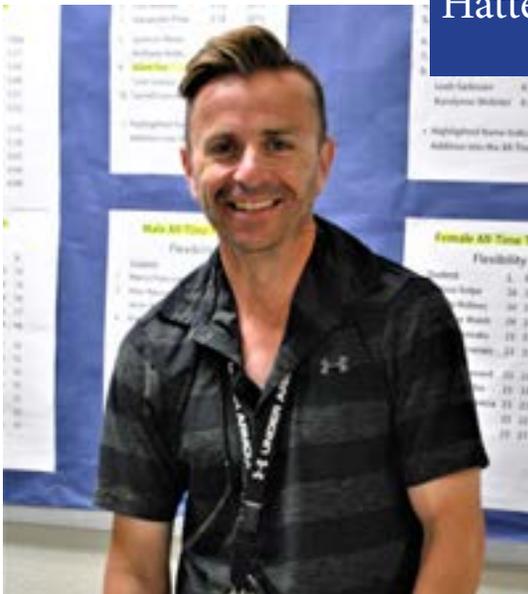
We are at the halfway mark for the 2019-20 school year and we have a lot of exciting happenings to report. From thanking our veterans with a variety of school activities to helping hurricane victims and joining the community with a share a Thanksgiving dinner served up by Danbury students, we have much to be grateful for. It is a continued network of sharing and contributing that make Danbury schools so successful in many ways.

With success comes growth and, as the city continues to grow and attract newcomers, so do our schools. We welcomed 350 new students this year and those numbers are anticipated to continue growing. Projections based on a demographic study indicate that our school population could increase by seven percent over the next 10 years. Danbury Public Schools and the City of Danbury are working to address this increase in student growth. A proposed short-term plan is to add classroom space to the Family & Community Engagement Center on Osborne Street that could potentially become an annex to Ellsworth Avenue School. We will continue to study the long-range building needs of the district.

What we have learned from all of this growth is that not only is Danbury a great place to live and go to school, but that every student is important and valued in our community. Where there is room for improvement, we will find it and make it our mission to continue to deliver the best education and opportunities for our students – all of our students.

Dr. Sal Pascarella
Superintendent of Schools

Hatters coach named 'NHSACA Coach of the Year' finalist



Head coach Robert Murray has been named a finalist in the National High School Athletic Coaches Association (NHSACA) 2020 National Boys' Cross Country Coach of the Year Awards Program. Murray was one of eight cross-country coaches selected from across the country. The title was based on criteria that included win/loss record, championship years and tenure as head coach.

A coach for 20 years, Murray was named cross-country Coach of the Year by the Connecticut High School Coaches Association in 2008 and by the U.S. Track & Field and Cross-Country Coaches Association in 2014. In 2017, he was inducted into the Fairfield County Interscholastic Athletic Conference (FCIAC) Hall of Fame; he has held the title of FCIAC Coach of the Year 13 times.

The NHSACA Coach of the Year finalists will be recognized at an awards banquet in July in Nebraska, where the Coach of the Year will be announced.

DHS technology education teacher chosen for statewide honor



Erik Savoyski, a longtime Danbury High School technology education teacher, was awarded the Harrison Baker award last week by the Connecticut Technology Engineering Education Association (CTEEA/ITEEA). Awarded at the CTEEA's annual fall conference, the Harrison Baker is the association's highest honor. Last year, DHS technology education teacher Sterling Miller was awarded 'Teacher of the Year' by the association. CTEEA is the professional organization for Connecticut technology education professionals and ITEEA is the International Technology and Engineering Educators Association. Each year CTEEA selects one middle school teacher and one high school teacher and a school program to honor. In addition to his role as technology education teacher, Savoyski is the advisor to Team 5150, the school's robotic team. The team has consistently earned awards and has several times earned a spot at the international level of competition.

"Erik puts in long hours to help our students both in and out of the classroom," said Superintendent Dr. Sal Pascarella. "He is very motivational with our students, encouraging them to respond to technological challenges on their own under his watchful eye. Erik has guided his robotics team through many competitions and we are always awed by what these students are able to accomplish."

Rogers Park math teacher receives Presidential Excellence Award

Kim Moran, a sixth-grade math teacher at Rogers Park Middle School, was one of four Connecticut teachers to receive the Presidential Excellence Award in Science, Mathematics, and Engineering (PAEMST). The honor was awarded to more than 200 educators nationwide for 2018.

Last fall, Moran had been chosen as a Connecticut State Finalist for the award. The awards program is the nation's highest honor for k-12 science, technology, engineering, mathematics and computer science teachers. It is administered by the National Science Foundation (NSF) on behalf of The White House Office of Science and Technology Policy. According to PAEMST, the state finalists represent the most outstanding teachers in each state and serve as both a model and inspiration to students and colleagues. Each year, a national committee of prominent mathematicians, scientists, mathematics/science education researchers, district level personnel, and classroom teachers recommends up to 108 teachers to receive PAEMST awards. Up to two teachers – mathematics or science - from each State, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the U.S. territories as a group, and schools operated in the United States and overseas by the Department of Defense Education Activity receive the award. Teachers who are selected as PAEMST awardees receive a trip to Washington, D.C., where they attend a series of recognition events and professional development opportunities. They also receive a \$10,000 award from NSF and a Presidential certificate.



"I had no doubt that Kim would move up from finalist to a recipient of this prestigious award," said Superintendent Dr. Sal Pascarella. "We have been making great strides in our math program at Rogers Park, and Kim has been a tremendous contributor to not only the program's success, but also in helping our students reach their goals."

Danbury schools: from giving back to giving thanks



Shelter Rock School 'starts with hello' in letter-perfect formation

Students at Shelter Rock School began their 'start with hello' week In October with an assembly on a Monday, followed by a weeklong series of events that help continue to foster a culture of inclusion at the kindergarten through fifth-grade school.

At the assembly Danbury Fire Department members made a special appearance to honor third-grade student Chris Gongora, who helped the fire department on an emergency medical call early in the month. Chris was hiking in a group when his eight-year-old cousin fell and later found he had broken his femur at Tarrywile Park. Chris was able to direct the rescue team to his injured cousin and get him help.

"He saved the day," said DFD Lieutenant Ted Mourges. "He was calm and helpful, and guided the firefighters into the woods to find the child." Mayor Boughton presented Chris with a certificate and also spoke to the entire school, commending their commitment to their school's culture of inclusion.

The fifth-grade class culminated the first day's program by singing "All You Need is Love."

That Tuesday members of the fire department returned to participate in "No One Eat Alone," by sharing lunch with students. On Wednesday, members of the Danbury hockey team had recess with the students and on Thursday, members of the Danbury Police Department came to visit the students.

ACE giving thanks for 42 years

Every year, students at the Alternative Center for Excellence have served thousands of dinners to the community at Thanksgiving time and Nov. 26 celebrated the school's 42nd year of giving thanks.

Students from ACE and from the culinary program at Henry Abbott Technical School get to school early in the morning to get ready for guests as early as 11 a.m.

Anne Mead, director of family, school and community partnerships, has enjoyed the event for ten years and said it "bring a sense of community." The dinner also attracts students from previous years who return to visit their teachers and show support.

Nick Potenziani, who attended the school when it was an elementary school, said he looks forward every year to the feast.

"This school has done a lot of good," Potenziani said while thanking the school for giving his daughter the opportunity to go to college and accomplish her goals.

The Thanksgiving event gives many people a place to come to where they can be embraced with a sense of community.

"[People] feel like they've been forgotten," says Dinillo Jimenez, a social worker at ACE. "Because of what this school does, people have the ability to feel a part of a large family that supports and cares for them."

Story by Marrcus Danzy





Pembroke students inspire schoolmates to contribute to hurricane victims

In response to devastation from the worst hurricane in Bahamas history in September 2019, Pembroke elementary school fourth-graders J.D. Andrews and Alex Ascone took it upon themselves to organize a fundraiser that collected more than \$1500 to help the victims.

To start the effort, the boys set up buckets in each of the schools' classrooms and urged their classmates to donate pennies to the cause. J.D. and Alex made announcements explaining the fundraiser and encourage competition. In just four days, the "penny wars" resulted in a sizeable donation to be sent to the American Red Cross.

Hurricane Dorian left hundreds of people missing and many more without homes, water or food. The Pembroke students felt even though the islands were a thousand miles away, they could still ease the burden of those impacted.

"It was devastating because it was going only five miles per hour," J.D. said. "They need stuff to survive right now. They can build houses later, but now they need food and water."

They are in the process of writing a letter to the American Red Cross to be sent with the donations.

"It's important to save people's lives," said Alex. "It's working together just a little bit to make a difference."

DPS teacher and published author shares experience with aspiring student writers at Westside Middle School



Danbury Public School teacher and author Kristin Ward visited the student staff of the Westside Warrior Magazine in December to discuss writing and publishing. The author of three published books, Ward is an elementary math specialist. Her young-adult novel, "After the Green Withered," garnered the Best Indie Book Award.

Local Kiwanis Club instrumental to DPS music education

The Kiwanis Club of Greater Danbury made two donations of dozens of instruments to Danbury Public Schools in October as part of its new initiative: "Kiwanis is INSTRUMENTAL in Children's Live."

The donations included trumpets, a trombone, a flute, electric bass, drum sticks, electric keyboards, electric and acoustic guitars, a drum set and a ukulele. The DPS music department will distribute these instruments among eight district schools.

In 2019, the district was named a 2019 "Best Communities for Music Education School District" for its commitment to and support of music education by the nonprofit National



Association of Music Merchants (NAMM). Danbury was one of 623 recognized districts nationwide and 18 in Connecticut. Jill Russell-Benner, the DPS K-8 music department head, is liaison between schools and nonprofit organizations and is instrumental in getting funding to schools specifically for music education.

Last year the district received more than \$140,000 in instruments and supplies from VH-1 Save the Music Foundation, and \$40,000 from NAMM. Efforts continue through the district to make certain that eventually all K-8 students will have access to musical instruments and education.

DPS names new Director of Finance and Business Operations

Courtney LeBoriosis has been named the new Director of Finance and Operations for Danbury Public Schools.

LeBoriosis was most recently the executive director of finance business operations for the City University of New York (CUNY), Hunter College, where she oversaw the college's budget, accounting, bursar, procurement and accounts payable departments. She previously held leadership positions in the area of public finance in New York with the Administration for Children's Services, the New York City Mayor's Office of Management and Budget, and the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene.

"Courtney LeBoriosis is an out-of-the-box thinker who impressed us with her knowledge of public finance in education, her demonstrated management skills in other similar large organizations, and her commitment to helping us grow the finance side of our organization effectively and efficiently. We are excited to have Courtney on our team to help to move our district to the next level," said Superintendent Dr. Sal Pascarella.



LeBoriosis earned a Bachelor of Arts from American University and a Master of Science with a concentration in urban policy analysis and management from the New School University, Robert J. Milano Graduate School of Management and Urban Policy.

DHS Robotics team working toward world competition



In early January, the Danbury High School Robotics Team 5150 held its own at its fifth competition of the season, with D team winning the Excellence award -- the highest award presented at any VEX robotics competition.

All seven DHS robots played in the elimination rounds with Teams G and J making the final round; J won Tournament Champion and G took Tournament Finalist. Four Danbury robots are now qualified for the Southern New England Regional Championships. The next tournament is Feb. 1 at Weston High School where the Hatters will compete to qualify for the World Championships.

AIS students learn from scientists in Antarctica



Students in Ruth Purdie-Dyer's second-grade classroom at the Academy of International Studies (AIS) are preparing to teach kindergarten students about Antarctica in late January.

The students in October held a live, televised discussion with scientists in Antarctica to learn about the environment firsthand. Students read books, watched videos and prepared questions to ask the scientists.

Dyer's now are working to put together three stations to share their experience with kindergarten students. The stations include a blubber mitt in freezing water to see how blubber provides warmth; a penguin egg station to see how penguins walk; and an iceberg station so students can see how most of an iceberg is below the water's surface.

DPS music faculty learns from noted composer

The Danbury Public Schools Music Department took part in a music education clinic with music composer Robert Sheldon in October. Sheldon is one of the most performed composers of wind band music and also one of the authors of "Sound Innovations," an instrumental methods book. During the clinic, Sheldon presented "Fix It Now! Developing Ensemble Skills for Successful Rehearsal Skills and Performances" and "To Music & Beyond," which included various rehearsal techniques and community building through music education.

The clinic was sponsored by Alfred Publishing as part of the Save the Music Foundation grant partnership with the DPS. This year, Shelter Rock School became the most recent recipient of the grant. There are seven Danbury schools designated as Save the Music Grantee Schools.

DHS students aspiring to be 'Future Health Professionals' head to state-level competition



DHS student Danielle Laureano

Four Danbury High School students have been chosen to compete at the state level of the Future Health Professionals competition in March.

Last week at a career fair at the school, 67 students in the Health & Bioscience Academy at DHS participated in the Future Health Professionals competition by presenting their health career displays that they have worked on since mid-September. Participation in the program is part of the school's Career and Technical Education (CTE) cluster. The academy is for students planning to pursue college degrees in various fields of medicine, including pre-med, physician assistant training, advanced practices nursing, nursing and physical therapy.

The career fair was the first phase of HOSA; Future Health Professionals, formerly known as Health Occupations Students of America (HOSA), an international career and technical student organization endorsed by the U.S. Department of Education and the Health Science Technology Education Division of ACTE, in which "the competitors shall develop a visual display of a specific career or cluster of careers in health. The competition encourages students to express ideas through an artistic medium and highlight the benefits of a particular career focus. An integral component of the project is to conduct an interview with a health professional currently working in the field. Students were encouraged to visit the health care professionals in their places of work to gain a better understanding of the full career experience. Students can also be judged on presentation skills. The project aligns with the health sciences national standards of employability skills and career-decision making.

Capturing the top prize at DHS was Danielle Laureano, whose focus is the field of oral and maxillofacial surgery. An interview with Dr. Marshall Kurtz, an oral surgeon in Danbury, helped solidify her professional goal: "One day I will change someone's life," Danielle said. Kurtz helped her visualize this career and understand that "becoming a surgeon can take over your life, but if you have the passion and drive for it, you wouldn't mind waking up every morning knowing you are doing what you love."

Annarita Lynch took second place with her display about pediatric nutritionists. She has a love for cooking and sees this as a great opportunity to combine her hobby with her passion to study medicine. Annarita interviewed her grandmother, Nancy Lynch who graduated from Marymount College in 1965 with a bachelor's degree in Food and Nutrition and went on to become a therapeutic dietician at New York Presbyterian. Annarita valued connecting with her grandmother and learning about her life experiences and felt it was the most impactful part of this experience.

Gabriela Galarza and Diana Siguenza teamed up to create a display on a U.S. Army combat medic and earned third place. Gabriela interviewed her brother and Army combat medic, Juan Galarza. The students were intrigued to learn that there are a multitude of healthcare positions in the military. Many were inspired to learn that the Army would help offset the costs of college.

As part of the career exploration initiative, the Health & Bioscience Academy has had a multitude of guest speakers from the community come in to discuss their career pathways. Sergeant Larry Lynch in mid-September. He highlighted the various military healthcare careers. In early October, a former Danbury High School and HBSA graduate, Laura Grant, talked about becoming a nurse in Danbury Hospital's Emergency Room. Dr. Amanda Placeres shared her experience working in naturopathic medicine and the options available at the post-secondary level.

The state-level competition will be held in Waterbury on March 7, 2020. Winners at the state level will compete internationally in June in Texas.

Hayestown celebrates 'Start with Hello' with 'Rainbow Fish' night

*Students, parents, faculty
celebrate diversity*



Hayestown Avenue School held "Rainbow Fish" night in January, based on the children's book about kindness and sharing. The PTO event included introducing the book and movie followed by an art project that involved parents and students.



Board of Education Members

Joseph Britton
Rachel Chaleski
Kate Conetta
Gladys Cooper
Loren Daly
Joseph DaSilva
Kathryn Hodgdon
Richard Jannelli
Kathleen Molinaro
Albert Russo
Amy Spallino

*For coverage of school events or to submit
school news, contact Robin Provey:
robineprovey@aol.com or the Board of
Education at (203) 797-4701.*

SCHOOL CALENDAR

January

1: New Year's Day-Schools Closed
7: One Hour Early Release for Students/PD
20: Martin Luther King Day-Schools Closed
21: Staff Only T-Eval 90 minutes after school
28: One Hour Early Release for Students/PD

February

11: One Hour Early Release for Students/PD
17: Presidents' Day-Schools Closed
25: One Hour Early Release for Students/PD

March

17: One Hour Early Release for Students/PD
31: One Hour Early Release for Students/PD

April

10: Good Friday-Schools Closed
13-17: Spring Recess - Schools Closed
28: One Hour Early Release for Students/PD

*Danbury Board of Education
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