

WESTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS REPORT

November 2018



Weston High School

Lisa Deorio, Principal

In this issue... Principal's Update
Professional Development
Academic Programs
Awards and Recognitions
Co-Curricular Programs
Athletics
Club News
Alumni News

PRINCIPAL'S UPDATE



November marks the beginning our annual 26 Days of Kindness initiative in remembrance of the victims at Sandy Hook Elementary School. From November 19 to December 14 individual staff and students, as well as clubs, initiate acts of kindness in our community. Examples include our student government sponsored food drive, and Weston Education Foundation coat collection. We encourage everyone to actively engage in this initiative.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

For their November 6 Professional Development Day, the entire high school Science Department, along with the middle school Science Team, traveled to Sacred Heart University to participate in a regional SciCamp CT event. SciCamp CT is an educator-led “unconference” designed to advance the understanding and implementation of the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) for CT teachers. Over 60 teachers from regional schools gathered to discuss and share effective classroom strategies, instructional practices, learner-driven activities, and 3D assessment techniques that focus on the various performance expectations, science skills, and crosscutting concepts of the NGSS. It was an exciting and rewarding experience.

Ms. Eisenman and Ms. Opidee attended the Secondary School Writing Centers Conference at the University of Connecticut, Storrs on September 21, sharing and gathering insight on opportunities for growth and development of Weston High School Writing Center.

Ms. Considine and Ms. Russo, along with two middle school teachers, attended the National Council for Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM) Regional Conference in Hartford this month. They took part in a variety of presentations ranging from specific classroom activities to philosophies on grading. Ms. Russo also had the opportunity to present a workshop on creativity in the math classroom using breakout boxes. It was a rewarding experience for all, and they were excited to share their learning with their department.



In late September Ms. Green, our College and Career Counselor, attended the National Association for College Admissions Counseling Annual Conference in Salt Lake City, Utah. With over 6,000 college admissions professionals in attendance, she had the opportunity to engage with colleagues from across the world. In addition to networking with admission professionals, learning about the latest college admissions news, attending workshops, and hearing from inspiring speakers, Ms. Green also had the chance to visit the University of Utah. She shared what she learned with the School Counseling Department and will utilize this information to support her work with our students.

On Friday September 21, our videography teacher, Mr. Brencher attended the FOX 61 Student News workshop. More than 50 teachers participated in the workshop given by industry professionals. The workshop covered the basics of shooting, editing and writing a story. The Fox 61 Student News program empowers Connecticut middle and high school students to explore the world of multi-media journalism by giving them the opportunity to capture, edit and publish original content under the guidance of industry professionals. The Television Production class is currently working on their stories that will be submitted as part of this outstanding program.

Social Studies teachers in grades 6-12 had an opportunity to participate in a trip to the Mark Twain House. The day was highly successful and so meaningful to the department. Dr. James Golden took them on a detailed tour of the home exposing them to knowledge of the time period, the greater Hartford area, and Twain's life through an engaging historical mindset. Our teachers were so engaged, asking so many questions to the curator, the tour lasted an extra 45-minutes.

After the tour, they made their way to the education center where Dr. Golden lead them through an inquiry workshop using objective sources focused on evidence-based learning. Dr. Golden tailored the workshop to the department goals on inquiry and analysis. Additionally, they learned how they can teach analysis through exhibition design using objects, images, and text to convey information and prompt new thoughts. Knowing that one of the goals focuses on writing, Dr. Golden highlighted how the exhibition design mirrors the analytical writing process and that the same skills are emphasized just through a different presentation mode.

ACADEMIC PROGRAMS

Twenty-one French exchange students visited Weston this November and were hosted by Weston families. The visit was arranged by French teacher, Mrs. Del Savio. During their stay, students spent two days at our school with their host students, and spent the other days taking educational trips into New York City. The French students took part in the daily announcements thanks to the help of videography teacher, Mr. Brencher. National French Week also happened to take place during their visit, and the cafeteria featured a couple of French food items. This is the first of two hosting opportunities our French students will have this year, and the first time Weston welcomed students from Emile Duclaux.

On October 23, Mr. Eric Olsen, father of Caroline and Alex, spoke to Introduction to Economics students about investment strategies. He offered tips and suggestions for the students as they participate in a National Stock Market competition through December 10. This was an amazing experience for the students who attended as they were able to get authentic advice and information from an expert in the field.

The Writing Center continued to be a busy support system for students this month. Mrs. Eisenman, Mrs. Gleason, and Mrs. Opidee met with 120 students to revise and edit their work. They also visited 19 classrooms to work with students on their assignments, including *Catcher in the Rye* process pieces and reflections on Document Based Questions. As always, we urge students to make appointments via the Writing Center website.

Students in Mrs. Eisenman's journalism class video chatted with WHS alumnus, Ali Bauman. Ali is a reporter with CBS News in New York City. Students asked questions about her career and what it's like putting a news story together in the real world. Ali also gave her insight on the state of journalism today.



On October 10, the Looking in Theatre group performed for our Freshman class. This group comprised of teenagers from the greater Hartford area, presented dramatic scenes dealing with important social, family and personal issues from a teen perspective. The topics covered included: use and abuse of drugs and alcohol; sexual decision making, and sexual orientation; depression, self-harm and suicide; bullying; diversity, prejudice and stereotypes; gender roles and healthy and unhealthy dating relationships; body image and eating disorders; and physical, emotional and sexual abuse. The aim of the program was to highlight the topics so that audience members could talk about these issues more openly.

On Monday September 17, Mr. Moeder's AP United States Government students traveled to Fairfield Ludlowe High School to participate in a town hall discussion of the United States Constitution. Senator Richard Blumenthal as well as State Representative Tony Hwang answered questions posed by students throughout the presentation. As it was Constitution Day, it was a fitting way to celebrate and gain a deeper understanding and appreciation of this founding document.

Mrs. Boulton's Environmental Science class joined Mrs. Hauser's Animal Behavior class for a presentation by artist and primate advocate, Robin Huffman. Ms. Huffman shared her experiences caring for orphan primates at a sanctuary in Cameroon. Her presentation touched on conservation challenges and included live footage showing the social behavior of these animals. Robin is known for her paintings of the primates for whom she cares and when not volunteering at the sanctuary, she shares her stories with communities and schools around the globe.

The Weston High School Chorale was featured in the opening ceremonies of the first annual Smart Kids walk in Westport on October 21. The local organization provides support for children with learning disabilities and their families.



Advanced Videography students are currently working on the DMV PSA contest. This year's contest focuses on the teen driver and positive group decision-making. Students are encouraged to engage the viewer in positive examples of how the driver and people around them can take a moment, pause and keep the vehicle safe when driving with the goal of obeying Connecticut's teen safe driving laws.

In addition, the Advanced Videography students are also working on StudentCam. StudentCam is C-SPAN's annual national video documentary competition that encourages students to think critically about issues that affect our communities and our nation. This year students are asked to create a short

(5-6 minute) video documentary on a topic related to the new 2019 competition theme, "What does it mean to be American? Choose a constitutional right, national characteristic, or historic event, and explain how it defines the American experience."

On October 24 Weston held its first ever celebration of United Nations Day! Weston town and school officials, students from the Model United Nations club and the Weston A Capella singers were on hand for a flag raising of the UN flag beneath the American flag at Town Hall. The group then heard inspiring speeches from First Selectman Chris Spaulding, President of the local United Nations Association, Bill Haas, and Model UN club Secretary-General, Aidan Delgass. We would like to thank local resident Marge Nieuwenhuis, who spearheaded the effort to organize this ceremony.



Students in the AP United States History classes of Mr. Jorge and Mrs. Klein participated in a recent simulation focused on the various crises our country faced during the 1790s. Students took on the roles of political leaders from this time, such as Alexander Hamilton and Thomas Jefferson, or groups of American citizens affected by the political decisions being made, such as shipbuilders and farmers. Students had to research various problems that beset the young republic and threatened its survival. The students then wrote and delivered their speeches in an effort to gain the votes of the citizens for each round of the simulation. Pictured are the winners in Mr. Jorge's classes: Arianna Berman and Brendan Sawyer, who represented Patrick Henry, and Elise Russell and Evan Levine, who represented George Washington.

AWARDS AND RECOGNITION

Social Studies teacher Mr. Jorge was recognized by the College Board's Advanced Placement Program® (AP) and Educational Testing Service (ETS®) for significant contributions made during the 2018 AP Reading. "In June 2018, 1,605 AP United States History teachers joined forces with college faculty who teach in the same discipline to score 501,530 exams. The careful evaluation of students' work by your faculty member and other highly qualified professionals is one of the most important aspects of the AP Program. A huge part of the AP Program's success is due to an evaluation and scoring process that reflects the high standards of AP Readers who, by virtue of their experience and expertise, have appropriate student performance expectations within their respective disciplines."



English teacher, Ms. Opidee's first novel, *Waking Slow*, was published with PFP Publishing on November 1. Set between Boston and a bucolic Greek island village, the novel traces an emotional, psychological, and spiritual quest for identity and understanding after the main character, Irinie "Rinie" Pothos has experienced a sexual assault on a college campus.

CO-CURRICULAR PROGRAMS

For the fall season, the Student Government's Shine-a-Light initiative selected Homes with Hope—a Westport-based, grassroots organization seeking to provide local relief for the homeless—for their community service project. In the coming weeks, students will be volunteering at Homes with Hope's food pantry and kitchen; representatives will also be giving their time at the organization's Women and

Children's Shelter, coordinating events for the children currently living under the roof of Homes with Hope.

Last month, Student Government organized a successful Homecoming. The theme of the week was "Eras." Students participated in night time events including a badminton tournament, a scary movie night, and the annual "Deck the Walls." During the day, students took part in dress-up events such as "Tropical Day" and "Pajama Day." A highlight of the week was the celebration of the 50th Anniversary of the current Weston High School. Weston Historical Society assembled a "pop-up exhibit" with pictures and artifacts from 1968, when the building was completed and opened. Of course, no homecoming week would be complete without the Powder Puff football game, which saw fierce competition, lively music from the WHS Pep Band, and tosses and tumbling from the cheerleading team. It was a fantastic week of fall fun!



WHS Company performed the play, *Almost, Maine* this November. This critically acclaimed romantic comedy of nine short plays debuted in 2004 and has quickly become one of the most performed plays in high schools across the country.

Playwright, John Cariani, came to Weston High School prior to the production for a workshop with the students. Mr. Cariani spoke with students about the area of Maine where he grew up that the play is based on. He also worked with students on performance techniques that relate directly to this production. Students were inspired by their time with him and were so grateful to meet this very talented actor!



WHS Company performed a collection of folk songs and fairy tales during Children's Story Theater in October. A great time was had by all of our youngest community members. In addition, Company had their second club event of the year on October 12. Members of Company and their friends enjoyed pizza and karaoke on the big screen.



Over the weekend of November 2-4, the Model United Nations club attended the 20th annual University of Connecticut Model United Nations conference (UCMUN).

Accompanied by club advisor, Mr. Jorge, and Social Studies/Latin teacher, Mrs. Guadagnoli, the 10 Weston High School students represented the governments of a variety of countries who discussed current international challenges such as the ongoing war in Yemen, air pollution levels in Southeast Asia, and tensions on the Korean peninsula. Before going to UCMUN, the students engaged in research on their country and topics, learned the basics of Parliamentary Procedure, and wrote essays to clarify their delegation's stance for each committee.

Every student reported that they had learned a great deal over this action-packed weekend and had a great time working with over 300 high schoolers from schools across the northeast. We were very proud to learn that two of our Weston students were selected by their directors for special recognition.

Margaret Lee was awarded "Most Improved Delegate" and Aidan Delgass was named "Best Delegate." Congratulations!

ATHLETICS

Esports had its opening competition in October. We are very excited to have Esports at Weston and are hoping it will allow other students to get involved and represent Weston High School in interscholastic competition.

Congratulations to our two SWC Champions this fall. The Girls Swim and Dive team won their fourth straight SWC Championship and the Boys Soccer team won their first SWC Championship – the first time for soccer in the history of our school. All fall teams qualified for the state tournament, our Girls Cross Country team took second-place in States and our Boys took ninth-place. The other fall teams start their state tournament runs in November, with the exception of football who still has three regular season games left to play. If they make the playoffs, their tournament begins in late November and early December.

CLUB NEWS

In honor of national domestic violence awareness month, members of Teen Peaceworks placed purple ribbons on trees at the campus entrance on School Road. Thirteen trees were wrapped with a bow representing the 13 domestic violence calls Weston Police Department received during the past year that ended in an arrest. A total of 60 ribbons were wrapped around the same trees to symbolize the total average number of calls in a year in which officers are called to help out with a domestic situation.

Our Robotics Team has expanded from a small pilot group of five 10th graders last year into a robust, experienced, 20-member team for this year's VEX Turning Point 2018-19 competition. Teachers, parents, the Weston Education Foundation, and even first-selectman Chris Spaulding pitched in last year in a fundraising effort to purchase the materials necessary to field such a large team and outfit them with the newest VEX V-5 systems to keep them competitive in the large field of VEX high school teams in Connecticut.



Here you can see students working with the new equipment to bring their robotic dreams to life. The Weston High School Robotics team will go to their first competition of the season on Saturday, December 1, 2018 at Masuk High School in Monroe, Connecticut where there will be up to 50 robotics teams from around New England in attendance. Weston Robotics Coach Mrs. Kaplan, who also coaches the Weston Middle School Robotics team, has planned to attend at least four tournaments with the high school team, beginning with the competition in Monroe and ending with a tournament at the University of New Haven in February 2019. This year the team hopes to be successful enough to earn at least one berth at the VEX New England Regional Championships in Worcester, Mass. on April 3-4, 2019.



Builders Beyond Borders students completed a project at STAR in Norwalk. STAR is a residential facility that provides programs for disabled adults. The students raked and mulched and cleaned up the outside of the building. Pictured here are Morgan White and Kayla Sarno with one of the residents.



The Westones, Weston High School's A Capella group, performed at Alcohol and Drug Awareness Program (ADAP) of Weston's first benefit event "Eats and Treats." It was a night of music, food and fun to benefit an important organization.

ALUMNI NEWS

Congratulations to Class of 2018 Alumnus, Max Chayat, who won the 2018 senior scholarship for performance on the on the National Spanish Examinations. Max was the 2nd place recipient of the 2018 Senior Scholarship.

WestonArts maintains an active list of graduates from Weston High School who are working in the Arts. You can view the list on their website at <https://www.westonarts.org/working-in-the-arts>. Please send an email to info@westonarts.org with details on your child and what they are doing in the arts.