



# EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

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A MONTHLY UPDATE BY THE CAPITOL REGION EDUCATION COUNCIL

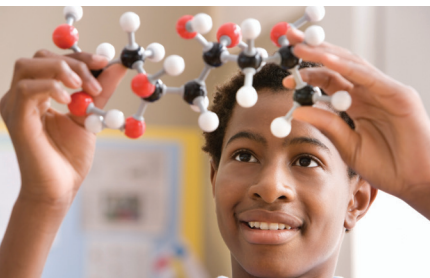
September 2014

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## Executive Director's Message

Bruce E. Douglas, Ph.D.

*"Human rights can only be assured among a virtuous people."*

—George Washington

*"Only a virtuous people are capable of freedom."*

—Ben Franklin

*"The only foundation of a free Constitution is pure virtue."*

—John Adams

*"No people can be great who have ceased to be virtuous."*

—Samuel Johnson

In these times, virtue is not highly valued  
and is seldom affirmed.

If one seeks relevance,..then one is irrelevant.

If one is virtuous without witness,  
seeking praise or status,  
then one will be relevant.



# District and School News

## At Hartford's Clark School, Hope for a Fresh Start

HARTFORD — Julie Johnson had distant memories of John C. Clark Jr. School, not having walked its halls since her son attended in the 1990s.

Now, with a 4-year-old daughter in tow, Johnson approached the North End school's entrance on Friday afternoon and noticed the lane of red carpet leading to the doors.

Inside, scuffed walls had been painted bright colors, stained ceiling tiles were gone, student desks, chairs and lockers looked new, and there were SMART Boards in the classrooms. Clark's plastic, opaque windows had been replaced with new windows that children and teachers can see through.

"It seems nice — bright and clean," Johnson said before leading her daughter, Sasha Malia Lanier, to meet her kindergarten teacher. Employees of the Capitol Region Education Council, Clark's new lead partner, offered to give tours.

"The school looks less scruffy," another parent remarked.

Clark's "Welcome Back" event on Friday included an outdoor festival that brought community groups and scores of children and parents to the school ahead of Tuesday's first day of classes. Along with free book bags and bicycle helmets, families received promises of a renewed effort to turn around the struggling school.

Clark is the latest member of the state Commissioner's Network, an intervention program that gives extra funding to low-performing schools that adopt a three- to five-year plan to raise achievement.

"This is all for you," Clark Principal Tayarisha Stone said, "... so that you know we care about you, that we believe in you and that you're going to have the best school and the best education. ... So, adults, I need you to support our



CREC Photo File: New partners CREC and John C. Clark Jr. School held a community "Welcome Back" event in August — before the start of the new school year.

students. I need you to be active. I need you to be in their lives."

After an initial impasse over who would lead the school, Clark's turnaround committee this spring chose CREC — the education agency that operates 19 magnet schools in the region — to manage Clark through an agreement with the Hartford school system.

School administrators have said they want to avoid the miscommunication and tension that unfolded at Hartford's Milner School, which entered the Commissioner's Network in 2012 and was managed by FUSE and the Jumoke Academy charter school organization. The group was paid \$345,000 annually for its work at Milner until the district, after citing a host of problems that ranged from curriculum to hiring, terminated the partnership in June.

The charter school operator FUSE is now the subject of an FBI investigation and state probe.

At Clark on Friday, state Education Commissioner Stefan Pryor, CREC Executive Director Bruce Douglas and a Hartford district administrator were among the officials who posed for photos with Stone and Clark parent Mille Soto, who was part of the turnaround committee.

CREC officials said their agency, which is not taking a management fee for Clark, has invested about \$2 million in capital improvements at the school this summer, including the new windows, classroom furniture, technology and an outdoor playscape. Commissioner's Network funding for Clark has not yet kicked in; the budget is being finalized, said Kelly Donnelly, a state education spokeswoman.

Soto, who believes the renovations will help the school's learning environment, said she cried after seeing the fresh look: "I didn't think my kids would have an opportunity like this."

Parents had long complained about the school's rundown condition. In February, a state report on Clark listed myriad challenges, such as chronic absenteeism, student behavior, low academic rigor and a climate where "large sections of the school are not clean, bright, welcoming."

Clark's turnaround plan calls for a rigorous academic program and teacher training, combined with an existing "community school" model that draws support from city partners and social services.

"We're going to have a good time," kindergarten teacher Elaine Douglas told Sasha, Johnson's daughter, after meeting the little girl. "Looking forward to Tuesday, OK?"

Source- Hartford Courant article by Vanessa de la Torre



CREC Photo File: The "Welcome Back" event was for all ages.

## Connecticut Parcels Out More Than \$130 Million to Alliance Districts

NEW BRITAIN — As back-to-school week draws closer, Gov. Dannel P. Malloy visited this city Thursday to declare that extra funding for Connecticut's most troubled school districts will amount to about \$132.9 million this year.

The school systems of 30 financially distressed communities are getting a share of the money to target specific goals in their plans to improve teaching and student performance.

"With this additional funding, districts are doing everything from focusing on early literacy to adding full-day kindergarten," Malloy said. "It's a huge step forward, one that is led, local level to the benefit of every child in that district."

The state began its Alliance District initiative in 2012, and so far has pumped nearly \$260 million into the most troubled schools. The state previously put aside the money for this year, but Malloy provided details on specifically how much each community will get.

"A central part of our effort to improve public education is to make sure that districts that need the most help are getting the extra support they need, and that's exactly what the Alliance District programs does," said Malloy, who made the announcement, a local school.

The schools must submit a detailed plan for improvement before getting state approval; Hartford and New Haven are tentatively earmarked for funding pending that approval.

In Greater Hartford, recipients include Bloomfield, \$820,191; Bristol, \$3,691,273; East Hartford, \$7,100,386; Manchester, \$3,857,041; and New Britain, \$11,079,553. Hartford's schools are tentatively scheduled to get \$12,855,661.

"Let me make absolutely clear that when it comes to education funding, Gov. Malloy is driving the bus," said state Rep. Rick Lopes, D-New Britain. "No other recent governor has done as much for public education."

Other recipients include Ansonia, \$1,516,974; Bridgeport, \$14,704,804; Danbury, \$6,696,567; Derby, \$1,039,795; East Haven, \$1,240,108; East Windsor, \$307,215; Hamden, \$3,987,286; Killingly, \$625,621; Meriden, \$6,181,187; Middletown, \$2,996,390; Naugatuck, \$1,594,214; New Haven (tentatively), \$12,068,095; New London, \$2,736,953; Norwalk, \$1,180,676; Norwich, \$3,878,849; Putnam, \$399,467; Stamford, \$2,626,442; Vernon, \$2,004,961; Waterbury, \$19,115,441; West Haven, \$4,097,639; Winsted, \$363,989; Windham, \$2,584,237; Windsor, \$928,381; and Windsor Locks, \$622,417.

More than half of the Alliance Districts — 19 in total — are devoting resources to expanding and strengthening pre-kindergarten programs or expanding full-day kindergarten, including Bristol schools.

"The Alliance grant provides the Bristol public schools with the exceptional opportunity to implement a high-quality, full-day kindergarten program beginning this year," Superintendent Ellen Solek said.

New Britain is applying money toward its English Language Learners program, and Superintendent Kelt Cooper said that has helped students with poor English skills become proficient more quickly than, any time in the past.

Source- Hartford Courant article by Don Stacom



# Recognition and Honors

## Arts Schools Network Recognizes CREC Greater Hartford Academy of the Arts

The CREC Greater Hartford Academy of the Arts High School recently received the Outstanding Arts School award from the Arts Schools Network, the largest professional membership organization of specialized arts schools.

The award is given annually to one school with an outstanding record of overall excellence in several categories, including faculty and student achievement, community recognition and involvement, and arts and academics integration.

The CREC Greater Hartford Academy of the Arts offers both full-day and half-day programs and has done so for more than 25 years. The goal is to encourage students to maximize both their academic and artistic potential, and CREC encourages its students to be creative and engaged citizens, while also preparing them to pursue careers in the arts.

## 39 CREC Students are Finalists in eesmarts Student Contest

In June, Energize Connecticut, Connecticut Light & Power, and United Illuminating announced the winners of its 10th annual eesmarts student contest.

For the contest, students in kindergarten through grade 12 are asked to share ideas for energy savings, renewable energy, and sustainability.

This year, there were more than 900 submissions from students throughout the state, and three CREC elementary school students and two teams made up of eight CREC high school students were finalists. In total, the contest's 39 finalists represented 15 Connecticut cities and towns.

## CREC Scores Well on ConnCAN Report Cards

Each year, ConnCAN, a statewide education advocacy organization, ranks school success in a number of different categories, and several CREC schools ranked at the top of ConnCAN's lists for the 2013-2014 academic year.

ConnCAN's report cards were released in August, and the following CREC schools were named the organization's top 10 "Success Story Schools" for 2013: the CREC University of Hartford Magnet School, CREC Montessori Magnet School, the CREC Metropolitan Learning Center for Global and International Studies, and the CREC Medical Professions and Teacher Preparation Academy.

The CREC Academy of Aerospace and Engineering ranked in the top 10 for overall performance, and the CREC Greater Hartford Academy of the Arts ranked in the top 10 for performance improvement.

Three CREC schools were named top 10 schools for African-American students: the CREC Medical Professions and Teacher Preparation Academy, the CREC Montessori Magnet School, and the CREC Metropolitan Learning Center for Global and International Studies. The CREC Greater Hartford Academy of the Arts ranked in the top 10 for Hispanic students.

The CREC Metropolitan Learn Center for Global and International Studies and the CREC Greater Hartford Academy for the Arts both ranked in the top 10 Connecticut schools for low-income students.

## CREC Open Choice Graduate Earns Annual Scholarship

Justin Eaddy, a 2014 Open Choice graduate of Glastonbury High School, received a \$4,500 annual scholarship from Sigma Pi Phi Beta Iota Boula.

The scholarship is awarded to African American male students who maintain a 3.0 GPA or higher while enrolled in an institution of higher education.

Justin is now a freshman at the University of Connecticut.



## Balkun's Sculpture Wins Regional Award

Anita Gangi Balkun, core faculty and teaching artist at the CREC Greater Hartford Academy of the Arts High School, was awarded second place at the CT+6 regional exhibit which was sponsored by the West Hartford Art League.

CT+6 is a juried exhibit open to artists in Connecticut, New York, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Vermont, Maine, and Rhode Island.

Balkun's entry was an assemblage sculpture titled, "Embedded Breath," and she received a \$500 prize.

# Events and Updates

## CREC Community Dances Its Way Into the New School Year

CREC staff and students are happy to be back, and they let their excitement show at this year's FallStaff.

The event was held August 22 at the Connecticut Convention Center, and emcees were Chad Williams-Bey, the student services coordinator at the CREC Academy of Aerospace and Engineering High School, and Michael Collins, a humanities teacher at CREC's Metropolitan Learning Center for Global and International Studies.

As the kickoff for the 2014-2015 school year, FallStaff highlighted both the enthusiasm and accomplishments of CREC's more than 3,000 employees and more than 8,000 students. There were videos of smiling children, special awards for deserving staff, and there was even dancing.

"Each year, when I stand before you, I am overwhelmed by the sheer power of the individuals that make CREC what it is—a strong and stable, thriving nonprofit that's serving the best interests of children and families and school districts throughout the Capitol Region," said CREC Executive Director Bruce Douglas during his FallStaff address.

Douglas stressed that staff should take the time to get to know and help one another. Everyone is interconnected, he said.

Of CREC, Douglas said the agency continues to both grow and pursue academic excellence and educational equality.

"I am enthusiastic about the direction we are going," he said. "I see great promise—and potential for even greater results."

Also addressing the crowd at FallStaff was state Department of Education Commissioner Stefan Pryor.



CREC staff and students are happy to be back, and they let their excitement show at this year's FallStaff.

Pryor praised CREC, saying that CREC always looks to generate educational excellence, and he said that he was proud of CREC's many accomplishments.

"It is breathtaking," Pryor said.

In addition to the speeches, FallStaff featured a performance by students from the CREC Greater Hartford Academy of the Arts. CREC's new football team, the CREC Colts, was also introduced, and several staff members received longevity and shining star awards.

This year's teacher of the year award went to Joseph DePasqua, of the CREC Academy of Aerospace and Engineering Middle School. Gerald Barrett, a grants coordinator for the CREC Institute of Teaching and Learning, was the distinguished service award winner; Aura Alvarado, CREC's director of communications, was named manager of the year; and Maria Perez, of the CREC Discovery Academy, was named paraprofessional of the year.



# Events and Updates (continued)

## CREC Renames School in Memory of Ana Grace Marquez-Greene



CREC is taking steps to ensure that love will always win.

In an effort to recognize the caring and compassionate nature of Newtown victim Ana Grace Marquez-Greene, CREC renamed the CREC Greater Hartford Academy of the Arts Elementary School. The school, which is located in a temporary facility in Avon, is now called the CREC Ana Grace Academy of the Arts Elementary School.

Signage will reflect the name change, and an official naming ceremony will take place when the school moves into a permanent facility.

“We are deeply proud to name the Arts Academy after Ana Grace,” said CREC Executive Director Bruce Douglas. “By doing so, we honor her life and her inextinguishable spirit. The legacy of Ana Grace, and her classmates and

teachers, will be forever present in our students and our community.”

As a tribute to Ana Grace’s kind and generous spirit, CREC will also incorporate into this year’s school curriculum the motto and philosophy of Love Wins, a campaign created by Ana Grace’s family. The goal is to promote love, connection, and community for every child and family.

Ana Marquez Greene is the daughter of Nelba Marquez-Greene and Jimmy Greene, alumni of the CREC Greater Hartford Academy of the Arts. Her parents are both also former CREC teachers.

“We are overwhelmed with joy to have a magnet school named after our caramel princess,” said the Greene family. “Its hallways are filled with the art and laughter of children from diverse backgrounds. The staff is dedicated to the wellness and development of every student. We are so incredibly thankful to our alma mater for honoring our daughter’s memory in this way.”

Ana Grace and the other 25 Newtown victims made a profound impact on CREC. Last fall, the agency dedicated a stone bench in their honor and planted tulips in their memory at CREC’s central offices in Hartford. The bench, the tulips, and now the renamed school will help

the CREC community remember Ana Grace and her classmates and teachers every day.

### Quotes from the Community

*“Tears...bittersweet...love is winning!” – Juana Adams*

*“What a wonderful way to honor this beautiful little angel.” – Kathryn Middleton*

*“Now that is something really good to read about.” – Sandy Guzman*

Source- Hartford Courant Facebook Page



## CREC and CompuClaim Partnership Supports Districts with School-based Medicaid

Through a new, state-wide partnership, CREC and CompuClaim offer both the support and expertise to simplify Medicaid billing. The partnership will maximize Medicaid revenue, while also providing best-of-breed, web-based software and billing tools that integrate with any student information system, or IEP system.

The partnership currently provides support to 32 Connecticut school districts, and that number continues to increase.

The support gives districts the tools and management to dramatically increase their revenue. Over the past year, participating districts doubled, or tripled, their revenue and they also continue to grow their school-based programs.

## Donation from the American Eagle Federal Credit Union Will Help Students Transition to College and Career

American Eagle Federal Credit Union at the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving made a \$1,000 donation to CREC Magnet Schools, to help students transition to college and career.

CREC Magnet Schools are committed to providing students with access to learning opportunities that ease their transition to college and career. With support from the district and funding from the American Eagle Federal Credit Union, CREC's Student Transition Program is now offering career clubs at each of the district's high schools.

The eight-week course is offered locally at each school and includes a variety of lessons, including creating a resume, cover letter, and portfolio, accessing career websites, and financial literacy.

During the course, students will also

learn about appropriate attire for formal interviews and professional careers. Each student completing the course is allowed to select a new, or gently-used, work-appropriate outfit from CREC's "Reach for the Stars" store. Funding from American Eagle Credit Union supports the purchase, and the program expects to dress more than 50 students this year.

CREC is grateful to the American Eagle Federal Credit Union for their ongoing partnership, which has extended beyond financial support. Representatives from area branches of the American Eagle Federal Credit Union will visit the career clubs at CREC high schools to talk about financial literacy, and it provides financial literacy training classes for students at the CREC Greater Hartford Academy of Arts.



(Left to right) Teresa Knox Senior Vice President, American Eagle Federal Credit Union; Christina Peterman, Development Officer, CREC; Nancy Frede, Job Coach for Student Transitions program, CREC Magnet Schools.

In the future there may be job-shadowing opportunities for students, and financial literacy may be integrated into CREC's elementary and middle schools.

## Making Camp Happen for CREC Students

This summer, CREC and Camp Jewell YMCA made camp possible for 80 CREC Magnet School students through scholarships.

This opportunity allowed the students to develop social skills, participate in organized activities, and create new relationships.

The camp experience was broken up into 4 sessions, and each child experienced two weeks of camp. Throughout the summer, the CREC Family Resource Center and CREC Central Office staff visited with the students.

To send the students to Camp Jewell, \$14,500 was raised from outside sources.

## Public Safety Program Provides Internships With Hartford Police and Fire Departments

Thirty students from Hartford completed five-week internships at the Hartford public safety complex this summer through the Hartford Youth Public Safety Program.

The program is made possible through a partnership between CREC and the city of Hartford.

Fifteen of the students were from the CREC Public Safety Academy, and 15 were from the Hartford Public High School Law & Government Academy. All of the students interned with the Hartford police and fire departments, became certified in CPR and First Aid, and learned about areas of employment in public safety.

During the program, students also visited the 9/11 Memorial Museum, and the visit underscored the importance of public safety servants in the community.





# Events and Updates (continued)

## CREC Expands Its Athletic Department; Offers Football

Looking to enhance the educational experience for students, CREC is expanding its athletic program. In doing so, it provides an opportunity for students to excel outside of the classroom.

CREC recognizes that offering an athletic program supports student development and success. CREC also knows that competitive sports can bolster school spirit, motivate students to get better grades, and teach them life skills.

CREC started its middle and high school athletic programs in the fall of 2012, and it continues to grow.

The program initially offered a limited number of middle school and junior varsity sports. This school year, CREC is adding football and volleyball, and it is now fielding varsity teams in most sports.

Football is unique in that the team — the CREC Colts — is made up of students from three CREC high schools:



In an effort to generate excitement about this fall's season, CREC's new football team, the CREC Colts, made an appearance at FallStaff.

the CREC Public Safety Academy, the CREC Metropolitan Learning Center for International and Global Studies, and the CREC Two Rivers Magnet High School. The decision for a co-op team was made because CREC schools are smaller than most high schools in Connecticut.

In its first year, the football team will

compete at the junior varsity level against other similar schools. Next fall CREC hopes to join a Connecticut Interscholastic Athletic Conference league and compete at the varsity level.

The football team's first game was September 13.

The CREC Colts are led by Damian Mincey, who has extensive experience in coaching, and the team practices and will host home games at the CREC Public Safety Academy's new facility, 1617 King Street in Enfield. Students who do not attend classes at the CREC

Public Safety Academy are bused to Enfield to participate.

"We've had about 37-50 kids come out, but most have never played before and are still grasping the game," Mincey said. "We will be very aggressive and dictate what we do. We will outwork everyone and be the tone setters."

## CREC Facilities Career Fair Encourages Local Applicants

The CREC Facilities Career Fair was held on July 28 at the New Britain Public Library, and 77 local residents attended to learn more about facilities careers and to apply for jobs with CREC.

CREC manages more than 35 facilities through the Greater Hartford area, including 19 interdistrict magnet schools, and it employs hundreds of facilities, operations, and maintenance staff.

"CREC is committed to connecting community members to great jobs and excellent job training in and around Hartford," said CREC Director of Facilities Douglas Henley. "We know that there are qualified people looking for quality jobs, and CREC is always looking for great people to work in our three-dozen plus facilities."

In addition to recruiting new applicants, the career fair offered custodial equipment demonstrations, cleaning product demonstrations, and custodial workshops. Other CREC divisions shared information about continuing education programs.

July's Facilities Career Fair was the second fair of its kind. The first was held in November at the Colt Complex in Hartford,



CREC looked for new hires at a Facilities Career Fair in New Britain this summer.

another Facilities Career Fair is being planned for next spring in the Enfield and Windsor area.