

# CREC SCHOOLS NEWSLETTER

**February 2016**

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## A Message from the Superintendent of CREC Schools

I hope this newsletter finds you well and that your new year is off to a great start. As we wrap up winter and head into spring, CREC's magnet schools continue to focus on providing new, innovative learning opportunities for students.

This year, we have been inspired to think critically about student learning through the implementation of our Essential Skills for Deeper Learning Framework. We are working diligently to specifically focus on communication and collaboration. Our goal is to improve communication—not only within the district, but also with our families.

To help strengthen the partnership between school and family, CREC Magnet Schools has designed a series of workshops to provide you with the information, resources, and tools to support you during your child's educational journey. The next workshop, "Tools for Using the Internet Safely," will be held on March 10 from 6 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. at CREC's University of Hartford Magnet School. If you are interested in attending this session, or learning more about our upcoming workshops, please visit [www.crec.org/parents/engagement](http://www.crec.org/parents/engagement).

The beginning of 2016 also marks a new era of leadership at CREC with the appointment of Executive Director Dr. Greg Florio. Dr. Florio brings with him a fresh outlook and an intense commitment to the success of our magnet schools.

As a leadership team, Dr. Florio and I are interested in how we can better serve our families. I would like to invite you to meet with Dr. Florio and myself to discuss your ideas on this matter. Please visit [doodle.com/poll/df9vm6xinbpw2dy](http://doodle.com/poll/df9vm6xinbpw2dy) to meet with us on one of the following dates:

Thursday, March 3: 7 a.m. – 9 a.m.  
Monday, March 14: 4 p.m. – 7 p.m.  
Tuesday, March 22: 7 a.m. – 9 a.m.  
Wednesday, March 30: 4 p.m. – 7 p.m.

CREC Magnet Schools is focused on finding new ways to better communicate with our families. To do so, we created an online form that allows you to submit any questions, concerns, or ideas that you may have quickly and confidentially. The submission form will remain open and will be checked for new questions each week. Please visit the new "Ask the Superintendent" tab located on the parent portal, [www.crec.org/parents](http://www.crec.org/parents), to ask your question today.

As CREC continues to grow and improve, we know our success is because of you—our families. Thank you for your continued support as we find new ways to connect, motivate, and empower your children every day.

Sincerely,

Dina Crowl  
Superintendent of CREC Magnet Schools

## CREC Magnet Schools Essential Skills for Deeper Learning



Connect • Motivate • Empower

# School and District Highlights

## CREC Metropolitan Learning Center Student Selected to Read for 2018 Intermediate Committee

Every year, Connecticut students have the opportunity to choose their favorite of the 10 books nominated for the Nutmeg Book Award. Winners are selected in four categories: elementary (grades 2-4), intermediate (grades 4-6), teen (grades 7-8), and high school (grades 9-12).

The 10 books that students read are

chosen by a selection committee charged with reading and reviewing between 80 and 130 books during the school year.

Alisha Mirza, a seventh-grade student at the CREC Metropolitan Learning Center for Global and International Studies, was selected as a member of the 2018 Intermediate Nutmeg Committee. Alisha is one of two students chosen to read

and vote for the best books in this category.

Over the next year, Alisha will read approximately 130 books and will attend collaborative meetings to review and discuss each text. During the final meeting, she and the committee will select the 10 nominees for the Intermediate Nutmeg Book Award.

## Teachers from China Visit Magnet School



Thirty-three teachers from China recently visited Glastonbury-East Hartford Magnet School. During their visit, the teachers enjoyed student performances, saw a planetarium show, and went on a school tour. They also taught 30-minute lessons about Chinese culture to students.

The visit is an example of a reciprocal partnership. It allowed the teachers from China to teach in an American elementary school, while allowing Glastonbury-East Hartford Magnet School staff and students to learn more about the Chinese language and culture.

## CREC Students Experiment with Oobleck

Grade two students at CREC's Discovery Academy recently participated in the school's third annual Oobleck Day. Oobleck Day was a culminating activity to the "States of Matter" unit. Students had the opportunity to explore Oobleck, a mixture of cornstarch and water that is both a solid and a liquid at the same time.

## CREC Two Rivers Students Participate in STEM Night at the Connecticut Science Center

On November 16, the UConn School of Engineering and the Connecticut Science Center held STEM night. One hundred and ten students from CREC's Two Rivers Magnet Middle School attended, viewing exhibits and participating in hands-on activities that were created by UConn engineering students.

The event also allowed students access to the Connecticut Science Center's displays. The students rotated between viewing the displays and participating in the UConn demonstrations. The goal of this first-ever cooperative is to work with middle school students to create an interest in science and engineering.

## CREC's Greater Hartford Academy of the Arts Middle School Recognized as a Top Debate Team

The Connecticut Middle School Debate League recently held its largest tournament to date.

One hundred and fifty-nine students from 15 Connecticut schools debated the motion, "This House would establish a program to revive extinct species and re-introduce them into the environment." The tournament's top two debate teams were from CREC Greater Hartford Academy of the Arts Middle School. Aiden Gillies, Anni Ciarcia, and Gavin Anderson took first place, and Samantha Acosta and Weimy Montero finished second.



## CREC Montessori Students Collect Items for Hands on Hartford

CREC Montessori Magnet School's first, second, and third-grade students and their families recently collected food and hygiene items for Hands on Hartford's food pantry and backpack nutrition program. In total, the school donated almost 100 pounds of food and other items, including more than 300 toothbrushes and 330 colorful holiday cards.

Parent volunteers Jimena Dolzadelli and Cristina Schatz helped to organize the drive.

## CREC Greater Hartford Academy of the Arts Presents "Violet"

CREC's Greater Hartford Academy of the Arts High School recently performed "Violet," a musical that encompasses show-stopping anthems, American roots, soul, and gospel.

"Violet" is a musical from Tony Award-winning Jeanine Tesori with a libretto from Brian Crawley. It is based on "The Ugliest Pilgrim," a short story by Doris Betts.

"Violet" tells the story of a young woman who embarks on a bus trip. She leaves her farm in Spruce Pine, North Carolina, and travels to Tulsa, Oklahoma, in search of a minister to heal her disfigured face. During her journey, Violet discovers the true meaning of beauty, courage, and love.

## CREC Students Assist with Health Screens



Students from the CREC Medical Professions and Teacher Preparation Academy recently helped school nurses at several elementary schools with pediatric health screens. Pictured here, Ashley Furze-White teaches students about the human body while they wait for their health screen.



# School and District Highlights

## Sports Clinics for Elementary Students

This fall, CREC Public Safety Academy student-athletes held sports clinics for students enrolled in the CREC International Magnet School for Global Citizenship's afterschool program.

The clinics were led by athletes from the CREC Public Safety Academy boys and girls soccer and cross country teams and provided the elementary school students with an opportunity to learn skill development and technique.

This is the second year of the partnership between the two schools, and it will continue this winter when members of the CREC Public Safety Academy basketball teams visit the CREC International Magnet School for Global Citizenship.



## CREC Soccer Standout Receives All-State Honors

CREC Metropolitan Learning Center for Global and International Studies soccer standout Abbie Miller recently received all-state honors, making her the first CREC student-athlete to be recognized in such a way.

Abbie, of Granby, is a sophomore at CREC's Metropolitan Learning Center

for Global and International Studies, where she plays midfield and forward for the Lady Dragons. In her freshman and sophomore seasons, Abbie scored a total of 41 goals and had nine assists. In both 2014 and 2015, she was named the No. 1 player in the all-conference selections.

"Abbie came in with obvious skills," said Dhana Tulloch-Reid, the CREC Metropolitan Learning Center for Global and International Studies head girls soccer coach. "She has the ability to take over a game and is becoming a more complete player."

## CREC Marks 50 Years of Excellence in Education



CREC began as a small, grassroots project in 1966 and has grown tremendously over the past 50 years, providing extensive opportunities for collaboration and cost savings to its member districts. Today, CREC operates more than 120 programs and services, 18 award-winning magnet schools, and a collection of the best programs and schools for students with special needs in the country. CREC has a reputation for developing innovative, high-quality programs and services, and the organization is known for demanding and delivering positive results for all children and families in the Greater Hartford area.

Recently, CREC held its 50th anniversary celebration at the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art in Hartford. During the event, CREC filled a memory chest with items that represent different parts of the agency and its history. The chest was created by the CREC Academy of Aerospace and Engineering in Windsor, and it will be displayed in the lobby of CREC Central on Charter Oak Avenue in Hartford throughout 2016.

# CREC's Academy of Aerospace and Engineering Hosts Girls STEM-C Event

On December 10, 120 dynamic female middle and high school students from throughout Connecticut participated in the annual Women in STEM-C program sponsored by the CREC Academy of Aerospace and Engineering, the CREC Greater Hartford Academy of Math and Science, and the Connecticut Computer Science Teachers Association, [www.ctcsta.org](http://www.ctcsta.org).

This program brings together female scientists, college professors, teachers, and high school mentors, creating an opportunity for them to share part of the exciting and creative aspects science, engineering, technology, math, and computing. It also highlights the role computer science plays in supporting all aspects of the digital world.

During the event, students had the opportunity to choose from a variety

of activities, such as computer-aided design, 3D printing, coding explorations, and the popular LEGO Robotic Racers.

"I liked LEGO Robotics Racers because we had to do multiple trials just like a real scientist," said eighth-grade student Sabrina Porter.

However, Porter's classmate, Lyonece Veasquez, thought LEGO Robotic Racers was difficult. "It kept not working, and we had to keep on fixing it over and over until we finally got it to work," she said. "And then, after we saw what we did and what we could have done better, I learned from the mistakes I made."

CREC Academy of Aerospace and Engineering seniors, Rebecca Abramson and Sara Banach, led sessions during the event. Rebecca led the very popular activity, Candy Chemistry, while Sara

taught an introductory computer science course using a program called Pencil Code.

When asked how the December event differed from other events, Sara said, "I really felt it made a difference, especially for the younger girls. The event made a difference for them to see someone like us, who is not even an adult yet, being able to do these things. It makes them realize that they can do stuff too!"

Dr. Chinma Uche, the computer science department head at the CREC Academy of Aerospace and Engineering, said, "This needs to happen more often to get our girls thinking about the contribution they can make to a diverse technical workplace. I want girls to feel like they belong in a workplace dominated by males."

## CREC Students Learn Engineering Skills Through SUMO-Bot Challenge

LEGO's Engineering for Kids Program recently visited CREC's Academy of Aerospace and Engineering Elementary School. Preschool through second-grade students enrolled in the school's aftercare program were charged with redesigning pre-programmed robots. These robots were made to push other robots outside the perimeter of a wrestling mat. The last robot remaining in the circular ring was declared the winner.

Through the program, 14 robots were redesigned, helping students to learn which structural properties would give their SUMO-bot the competitive edge. For example, the lower the center of gravity; the heavier the robot and the more likely it was to win the competition.

The activity aligned with the school's theme, helping students to learn science, technology, engineering, and math in a fun way.





# Awards and Recognitions

## CREC Academy of Aerospace and Engineering Students Awarded Perlan Project Slots

Later this year, The Perlan Project will attempt to place a fixed-wing, engineless aircraft on the edge of space. If they are successful, they will be the first program to do so.

In addition to a two-person crew, the aircraft will carry scientific instruments to provide new insight into climate change and our upper atmosphere. Because it lacks an engine, Perlan 2 can explore the edge of space, testing for gasses without polluting the atmosphere

it will study. The project will allow humans to better understand topics ranging from the rate of ozone depletion to the physics of flying an aircraft on Mars.

For the past year, students throughout the country have submitted proposals to Steve Fossett, Einar Enevoldson, and the Perlan 2 team in an attempt to earn one of the coveted six experimental slots aboard the Perlan 2 aircraft. It is with excitement that we share that two of the

six student experiment slots onboard the Perlan 2 aircraft have been awarded to student teams from the CREC Academy of Aerospace and Engineering.

On January 14, the school took part in its first teleconference with members of the Perlan team, airbus officials, and the sponsors of The Perlan Project to review the experiments and to discuss the base kit designs. For more information on The Perlan Project, visit [www.perlanproject.org/](http://www.perlanproject.org/).

## Montessori Students Grow Award-Winning Crystals

Three students from CREC's Montessori Magnet School grew crystals that won awards in the U.S. Crystal Growing Competition.

One of the award-winning crystals was a collaborative effort between two fourth-grade students, Anna Maria Tippner, of Cheshire, and Jayla Walker, of Hartford. The crystal won first prize in the overall competition in the division for kindergarten through grade eight students. They received a \$200 cash prize.

Also from CREC's Montessori Magnet School is fifth-grade student Natalie Norbut, of Bristol, who won sixth-place in the best quality category.

The crystals began as a class project. More than 25 students at CREC's Montessori Magnet School met in small groups to experiment with different conditions when growing their own crystals. Students checked on their crystals daily, and the two best crystals were sent to the national competition.



"The winning crystal was submitted by two students who worked together, and we are very proud that they were

able to collaborate and produce such a specimen," said Vivian Novo-MacDonald, the school's assistant principal.

# CREC Forms Student Senate

On January 15, CREC's first Student Senate held its inaugural meeting. The group is comprised of 14 students who attend CREC's secondary schools.

During the Senate meeting, students and members of the CREC Magnet Schools leadership team discussed concerns and shared ideas. Students were able to meet one another and enjoyed helping to shape CREC's future.

Students were nominated by their respective schools to participate in the Student Senate. The group was formed to improve communication between students and CREC's leadership, and it is meant to be an opportunity for students to voice concerns and offer solutions to problems.



## The following students are members of the 2015-2016 Student Senate:

### **CREC Academy of Aerospace and Engineering**

Nikhil Bhat, Grade 11

Gina DePasquale, Grade 11

### **CREC Greater Hartford Academy of the Arts High School**

Ryan Glander, Grade 12

Bridget Kennedy, Grade 11

Lo-Ruhamah Parmlee, Grade 11

### **CREC Medical Professions and Teacher Preparation Academy**

Katherine Mason, Grade 11

Pieta Okonya, Grade 11

### **CREC Metropolitan Learning Center for Global and International Studies**

Lauryn Flowers, Grade 11

Jenna Stern, Grade 10

### **CREC Public Safety Academy**

Adamaryllis Colon, Grade 12

Isaiah Figueroa, Grade 10

Sydney Greaves, Grade 12

### **CREC Two Rivers Magnet High School**

Amritha Anup, Grade 10

Andrew Helmin, Grade 11



# CREC FAMILY ENGAGEMENT SERIES

C o n n e c t • M o t i v a t e • E m p o w e r



## Tools for Using the Internet Safely

March 10, 2016 • 6 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.

CREC University of Hartford Magnet School  
196 Bloomfield Avenue, West Hartford, CT 06117

Presenter: Detective Daryll J. Christensen: Connecticut Department of  
Emergency Services and Public Protection, Division of the Scientific Services  
Computer Crimes and Electronics Evidence Laboratory

Learn how to protect your family on the Internet by participating in a discussion  
about Internet safety, cyber bullying, and personal privacy. This session is  
intended for parents only. Childcare is provided.

To register for this workshop, visit [www.crec.org/parents/engagement](http://www.crec.org/parents/engagement)

For more information, contact [familyengagement@crec.org](mailto:familyengagement@crec.org).

