

TPS SUPERINTENDENT BULLETIN



“It’s called ‘reading’. It’s how people install new software into their brains”

UPDATE FOR March 6, 2015

JUMP TO SCHOOL UPDATES:

[Birch Grove](#)

[TIS](#)

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[THS](#)

Please note: This is your weekly digital backpack from all the schools, you will not receive individual digital backpacks as they are included in this District bulletin. It will provide access to all bulletins, in one place.

TPS SUPERINTENDENT BULLETIN

SUPERINTENDENT' NOTES FOR THE WEEK

From the State on the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) testing:

We aim to ensure that your child—and all of Connecticut students—receive an education that prepares them to thrive in a global economy and civic life. That’s why Connecticut raised the bar and issued a new instructional roadmap. This new roadmap, the Connecticut Core Standards, sets learning expectations for what students should learn and be able to do at each grade level so that so that by the time they graduate from high school, they are ready to succeed in college and the workplace.

*With these new learning goals, Connecticut needs new ways to measure student progress. Assessments are like academic checkups. They help teachers and parents see where students are compared to where they need to be. The results can reveal subject areas where a student is excelling and subject areas where a student needs extra help. **This year, the Smarter Balanced assessments will replace our old statewide tests, the Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT) and Connecticut Academic Performance Test (CAPT), in reading, writing and math.***

The Connecticut Core Standards focus on critical thinking and problem-solving—the real-world skills students need to be successful in college and careers. The Smarter Balanced assessments will be administered on computers and are designed to measure these skills through reading comprehension, writing, and math questions that require students to demonstrate that they truly understand the content. Additional supports are available for some students with special needs, as determined by an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or 504 Plan.

With the new tests, students will receive new scores. Results will be different and scores will likely look lower on the Smarter Balanced tests than what many are used to seeing on the CMT/CAPT exams. This means that, in the beginning, fewer students may score at higher levels. This does not mean that students are learning less. Rather, it reflects that we are setting a new baseline from which our students will continue to grow.

States that made the transition early did see a drop in scores, but they are also seeing improvements year-to-year. For example, in Kentucky, the percentage of high school graduates ready for college and careers has increased from 38 percent to 62 percent in just four years. As students and teachers gain more classroom experience with the standards, we anticipate that scores will steadily improve in the coming years.

To find more resources specifically for parents and guardians, including ways to help your child with the new standards at home, please visit CTCoreStandards.org.

This is certainly a big shift for our students and teachers—but one that holds great promise for our children. By making this transition, we are better preparing our kids to meet the demands of college and the 21st century workforce. Our teachers and administrators are committed to working together to support students with great instruction and resources to meet these new expectations.

TPS SUPERINTENDENT BULLETIN

- I will do a brief report on testing at the March 11th, BOE meeting – but for a longer discussion please come to the Superintendent’s Breakfast- March 18th 9:00 – 10:00 AM @ 51 Tolland Green (the Superintendent’s office).
- Please also see the [Administration of Annual Assessments](#) letter from the state – it describes the state testing requirements.

INFO TO KNOW:

- A COMMON CORE site that has information for parents: http://ctcorestandards.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/CCSS_Intro_for_Families.pdf
- [Board of Education Agenda for the March 11, 2015 meeting.](#)
- **The State of Connecticut is now beginning the search process for the 2015-2016 student Board members.** Please see the link below for the application package. It can also be downloaded by accessing the Department’s website:www.state.ct.us/sde. This is for **Grade 11** students. Completed applications must be postmarked on or before **March 16, 2015.**
- http://www.tolland.k12.ct.us/UserFiles/Servers/Server_891568/File/CT%20State%20BOE%20Application.pdf

ARTICLES OF INTEREST

Teams appear to be better than individuals at analyzing intelligence, according to research led by University of Pennsylvania psychologists. Researchers organized a group of 743 adults to participate in an intelligence analysis contest between 2011 and 2013, which sought predictions of 199 world events of interest to the U.S. intelligence community, including picking the winner of the 2012 presidential election in Taiwan, determining whether Syrian President Bashar al-Assad would remain in power and predicting whether North Korea would conduct another successful nuclear weapon test. Participants were assigned to work on their own or in teams. Findings showed that the teams were approximately 10 percent more accurate in their predictions than individuals working alone (*Journal of Experimental Psychology: Applied*, online Jan. 12).

Helmets and seatbelts are the best way to prevent head injuries, finds an analysis of data from more than 40,000 cases of brain trauma in children. A multi-center study showed that the most common cause of brain injury among children under 12 is falling — typically from a moving bicycle, scooter or other wheeled device. Among adolescents, the three major causes include automobile accidents, assaults and sports-related injuries. The results point to the importance of educating parents and policymakers about the value of safety helmets and seatbelt use in reducing head injury severity (*New England Journal of Medicine*, Nov. 13).

The brains of men and women respond differently to smoking, suggests research from Yale University. Eight men and eight women smokers underwent positron emission tomography (PET) brain scanning as they smoked. The scans showed that among men, dopamine release was consistent and rapid in the right ventral striatum, a brain region central to the reinforcement effect of drugs such as nicotine. For the women smokers, a similarly rapid dopamine response was found only in the dorsal

TPS SUPERINTENDENT BULLETIN

striatum, a brain region that is critical for habit formation. These findings could lead to breakthroughs in developing gender-specific treatments to help smokers quit, the authors say (*The Journal of Neuroscience*, online Dec. 10).

Overweight teens who have successfully lost weight did it more for their own sake than to impress their peers or please their parents, suggests research by Brigham Young University researchers. They interviewed 40 formerly obese or overweight teens about their success and found that on average, participants shed 30 pounds, moving them from the obese to the normal weight category. They also maintained their weight for a full year. More than 60 percent described their health as the primary motive, and nearly all of the teens emphasized that it was their own decision to lose the weight (*Childhood Obesity*, December).

Women with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) may be nearly twice as likely to develop Type 2 diabetes compared with women who don't have the condition, according to research out of Columbia University's Mailman School of Public Health. In an analysis of data collected from 1989 to 2011 on 49,739 women, the researchers found that the greater the number and severity of PTSD symptoms, the greater a woman's risk of Type 2 diabetes. By age 60, nearly 12 percent of women with the most PTSD symptoms had developed Type 2 diabetes, whereas fewer than 7 percent of women with no trauma exposure had diabetes. Antidepressant use and elevated body mass index accounted for nearly half of the increased risk of diabetes; smoking, diet quality, alcohol intake and physical activity did not explain the association (*JAMA Psychiatry*, online Jan. 7).

Stress may increase desire for a reward, but it may not make the indulgence more enjoyable, according to a study by University of Geneva psychologists. Researchers randomly assigned 36 self-proclaimed chocolate lovers to keep one hand in either ice-cold or lukewarm water while being videotaped. Afterward, all participants had to press a handgrip for the chance to smell chocolate when they saw a certain symbol. The researchers found that the "stressed" participants who had their hands in ice-cold water exerted three times more effort to smell chocolate than the unstressed participants, but both groups reported about the same level of enjoyment of the aroma (*Journal of Experimental Psychology: Animal Learning and Cognition*, online Dec. 22).

Binge drinking significantly disrupts the immune system in young, healthy adults, according to a study conducted at Loyola University Health Systems. Depending on their weight, study participants drank four or five shots of vodka over two hours. Blood samples collected 20 minutes after peak intoxication showed increased immune system activity. But when measured again two hours and five hours after peak intoxication, participants' immune systems had become less active than when sober (*Alcohol, online* Dec. 4)

The brains of obese children may be more responsive to sugar, according to a study conducted at the University of California, San Diego. Researchers used fMRI to scan the brains of 23 8- to- 12-year-old children — 10 of whom were obese and 13 of whom were at healthy weights — while they were directed to swirl a sugar-water mix in their mouths with their eyes closed, focusing on its taste. The brain images showed that obese children had heightened activity in the insular cortex and amygdala, brain regions involved in perception, emotion, awareness, taste, motivation and reward. This elevated sense of "food reward" could mean some children have brain circuitries that predispose them to crave more sugar throughout their lives, the researchers say (*International Journal of Obesity*, online Dec. 11).

Pediatricians appear to miss autism symptoms in brief checkups, concludes a study conducted at the University of Utah. Researchers studied videos of pediatric exams in which care providers performed autism evaluations for 42 15- to 33-month-old children. The researchers found that within 10-minute spans, children with autism exhibited much more typical behavior than atypical behavior overall, making it easy for clinicians to miss indicators of autism risk. In the study, even the experts who reviewed the videos failed to make referrals for 39 percent of the children with autism, based on the brief observations alone (*Pediatrics*, online Jan. 12).

Parents who use material goods to reward or punish their children may be setting those children up for difficulties in adulthood, according to a study from the University of Missouri and the University of Illinois at Chicago. Researchers surveyed more than 700 adults on their relationship with their parents and the rewards and punishments they received during several critical stages of childhood. The researchers found that when parents rewarded children with gifts for accomplishing something, gave gifts as a way to show affection or punished children by taking away a favorite toy or video game, the children were more likely as adults to believe that success in life is defined by possessing material goods or that acquiring certain products will make them more attractive (*Journal of Consumer Research*, in press).

People trust typical-looking faces most, suggests a study led by a Princeton University psychologist. In one experiment, the researchers created a "typical" face by digitally averaging 92 female faces, and they also created an "attractive" face by

TPS SUPERINTENDENT BULLETIN

averaging the 12 most attractive faces — based on prior research — from another set of faces. They then combined the two faces into one and created nine variations that had differing levels of attractiveness and typicality. Female participants rated each variation on either trustworthiness or attractiveness. Findings revealed that the closer a face was to the most typical face, the more trustworthy it was considered to be. When it came to attractiveness, however, typicality didn't seem to play a role ([Psychological Science](#), online Dec. 16).

TPS SUPERINTENDENT BULLETIN

Tolland High School Weekly Bulletin **3-6-15**

Tolland Triumphs Over Hunger – Over \$12,500 Raised

The Tolland High School DECA club is sponsoring a large-scale community service event called Tolland Triumphs Over Hunger. The project empowers students, staff, and community members to work together to positively affect change in the lives of others. Guided by the charity organization, Feeding Children Everywhere, more than 900 Tolland students, staff and community members will participate in a meal packing event on Thursday, March 12 at Tolland High School. Our goal was to raise \$10,000 in order to package 40,000 meals. To date, we have raised over \$12,500 towards our goal. Last week, J.P. Morgan Chase matched our donation through the campaign known as “Step Up for World Hunger”. In light of that, we will now be packing 100,000 meals this coming Thursday morning. Thank you to all those individuals, corporations, and organizations who donated. If you are still interested in making a donation, please click on the link below.

[FEEDING CHILDREN EVERYWHERE DONATION PAGE](#)

National Honor Society Blood Drive

The National Honor Society students of Tolland High School hosted the American Red Cross Blood Drive on Tuesday, February 24, 2015. Sixty donors presented (54 students, 5 staff, 1 parent) and 49 units of blood were successfully collected, meeting 98% of our goal of 50 units of blood.

Blood drive chairs and NHS members **Kathleen Moriarty**, **Jordan Shea**, and **Casey Lynn Sowle** volunteered for the full day and were instrumental in the organization and operation of the blood drive. All other NHS students volunteered in half block increments throughout the day and were responsible for running different areas of the blood drive such as the registration table, checking donors out, escorting donors to designated areas, and ensuring donors had food and drink.

The National Honor Society plans to host another blood drive sometime next year during the 2015-2016 school year.

Tolland Art Students Earn Top Honors at Scholastics Art Competition

Two Tolland art students garnered awards at the 2015 Connecticut Scholastics Art Awards competition. Top gold awards were received for a drawing portfolio completed by artist **Colin Stirt**. One of Colin's portfolio drawings also earned a Connecticut Art Educators Association

TPS SUPERINTENDENT BULLETIN

Best in Show award in the drawing category. In addition, he received multiple gold, silver and honorable mention recognitions. **Taylor Casey** earned an honorable mention award for her graphite self-portrait in the drawing and illustration category.

Gold awards by Colin Stirt will go on to compete at the national level. An awards ceremony for all Connecticut award winners was held on Sunday January 25, 2015 at the Lincoln Theater, University of Hartford.

The Scholastic Art Competition is a long-standing national arts competition that recognizes excellence in the visual arts. M.R. Robinson, the founder of Scholastic Inc, established it in 1923. Students from across Connecticut compete at the state level. Awards are given in fourteen juried categories and include honorable mention, silver, and gold key awards. Gold key awards then move on to compete at the national level. National award winners will be exhibited at the Corcoran Gallery in Washington DC. The art department and the entire THS community wish Colin the best of luck as his work moves forward in the competition.

Colin recently received an \$88,000 scholarship to the Hartford Art School at The University of Hartford. Congratulations Colin!

IMPORTANT DATES

March 7 – Coffee House – 7:00 p.m. THS Cafeteria
March 9 – 11 – Scholarship Phone-A-Thon
March 11 – Half-Day Session In-Service
March 12 – Tolland Triumphs Over Hunger - Feeding Children Everywhere
March 13-14 – School Musical
March 16 – Baseball Conditioning Begins
March 17 & 18 – CAPT Testing
March 20 – Mr. THS – 7:00 p.m. Auditorium
March 23 – All other spring sports start
March 23 – Booster Club Meeting – 7:00 p.m. Conference Room
March 25 – Half-Day Session – In-Service
March 26 – Music Concert – 7:00 p.m. Auditorium

COFFEE HOUSE

Tolland Youth Services Community Theater will hold its coffee house on Saturday, March 7, 2015 at 7:00 p.m. in the THS cafeteria.

SCHOOL MUSICAL – BACK TO THE 80'S

TPS SUPERINTENDENT BULLETIN

Back to the 80's is a musical with lyrics written by Neil Gooding. The musical tells the story of the 1989 graduating class of William Ocean High as seen through the eyes of the narrator, Corey Palmer Sr., who is now living in the year 2001. Corey Sr. reminisces on his senior year of high school, as well as his love for Tiffany Houston. However, Tiffany barely notices, as she is too busy mooning over Michael Feldman, the hottest guy around. Will Corey Jr. work up the courage to ask Tiffany to be his girlfriend? Overall, will Corey Jr.'s senior year be everything he hopes for? The musical consists of many pop songs from the 1980s, including "You Give Love a Bad Name", "Footloose", "Total Eclipse of the Heart", just to name a few!

Show times: March 13th and 14th at 7:00 p.m. in the auditorium. Snow date March 15th at 2:00 p.m.

Tickets will go on sale the week of March 9th during lunches and in the main office, and will be sold at the door on both nights. Ticket prices are \$10 for adults and \$8 for students and senior citizens.

BOOSTER CLUB

The next meeting is scheduled for March 23rd at 7:00 p.m. in the THS main office conference room.

Please join us to learn about what we do and how you can help in raising funds for our students at THS.

We are looking for a treasurer and a new president for next year.