



# The Communicator

Simsbury Public Schools—Continuously Improving Teaching & Learning • Winter 2018-19



Dear Neighbor,  
As you can read in more detail in the article on this page, we are so excited about our progress

toward developing our Vision of a Graduate (VoG). Our goal is to create experiences for our students that are more robust and relate to the competencies we have identified through this process. As we work to revise and refine the VoG, we are motivated by our confidence that when SHS students graduate, they will have been taught the skills they need for a world that is changing constantly. We believe it is these amazing young men and women who will change the world for the better.

Our innovative and impassioned teachers relish the role they play in helping students to change the world. For two years we have been studying the impact of school start times on learning. We have made great strides in parsing the experts' recommendations and identifying the logistical considerations related to making changes district-wide. Getting stakeholder feedback is of course vital to this process. For more information about where we are on this issue, please see the article on this page.

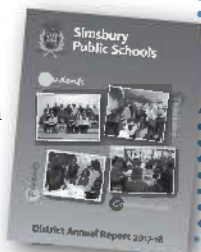
All of us here at the Simsbury Public Schools wish you a joyous holiday season!

Respectfully,

Matthew T. Curtis, Superintendent  
Tara Donohue Willerup, BOE Chair

## View Annual Report Online

The *Simsbury Public Schools District Annual Report 2017-18* is available online at <https://www.simsbury.k12.ct.us/district/annual-reports-cips>. Annual reports for each of Simsbury's public schools are posted on the webpage as well.



## Developing Our "Vision of a Graduate"

As part of a comprehensive district strategic plan, Simsbury's Board of Education (BOE) sets goals every five years, some that are achievable in the short term but some that require a real commitment to growth and positive change over the long term. Developing a "Vision of a Graduate" ("VoG") is one of these long-term initiatives.

This year we enlisted the aid of all of our faculty and administrators to help us recognize and define the competencies required for Simsbury High School (SHS) students to be successful in a society that places a premium on skills such as collaboration, problem solving, and creativity. By identifying and prioritizing key competencies and skills for our students, we will ensure that all our graduates will be prepared to contribute to a global society with integrity, empathy, and resilience.

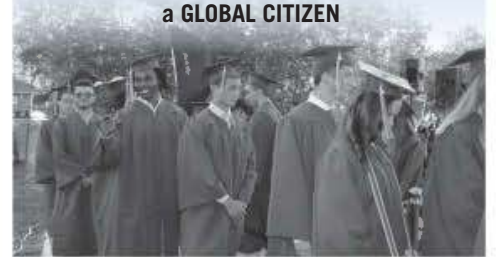
As part of the process, during the rest of this 2018-19 school year, SHS will be

conducting departmental audits of current practices to identify celebrations and areas of opportunity.

The six major competencies we have identified are listed below.

### A Simsbury High School Graduate Must Be...

- a **CRITICAL THINKER**
- a **COMMUNICATOR**
- a **COLLABORATOR**
- a **SELF-DIRECTED LEARNER**
- an **INNOVATOR**
- a **GLOBAL CITIZEN**



## Later School Start Times Key to Academic Success?

According to Hanover Research (February 2013), students, even as young as kindergarteners, are getting less sleep than they did in 1980. Experts contend that later school start times contribute to academic success for middle and high school students. The American Academy of Pediatrics and American Academy of Sleep Medicine advise that these students should begin school no earlier than 8:30 a.m. The question is, would this work for Simsbury schools?

The district began with a year-long study

during the 2017-18 school year. Logistical considerations included impact on athletics, extracurricular activities, and transportation was researched. With this information in mind, the Board of Education felt it was essential to gather specific survey data from parents, students and staff. These stakeholders were asked to provide feedback on the 3 options below. We are currently assessing the feedback from that survey. To review the research already conducted on this issue, visit [www.simsbury.k12.ct.us](http://www.simsbury.k12.ct.us).

CURRENT SCHEDULE			PROPOSED SCHEDULE OPTION 1			PROPOSED SCHEDULE OPTION 2		
Secondary schools start at <b>7:32AM</b>			Secondary schools start at <b>8:00AM</b>			Secondary schools start at <b>8:30AM</b>		
	Start	End		Start	End		Start	End
Secondary	7:32AM	2:10PM	Secondary	8:00AM	2:40PM	Secondary	8:30AM	3:10PM
Elementary (all except SQL)	8:15AM	2:50PM	Elementary	8:45AM	3:20PM	Elementary	7:45AM	2:20PM
Squadron Line (SQL)	8:45AM	3:20PM						
Buses start at 6:35AM for secondary and 7:35AM for elementary.			Buses start at 7:05AM for secondary and 8:05AM for elementary.			Buses start at 7:45AM for secondary and 7:05AM for elementary.		

## PreK/Kindergarten Census

Each year we conduct a census of all children residing in Simsbury who are pre-school age. With this information, we can more accurately estimate the number of children who will enter kindergarten from each area of our community. Based on this survey, families with an age-eligible child for the 2019-20 school year will receive registration information in January 2019. If you have a pre-school age child or children residing in your home, please complete a brief survey by **January 7, 2019**. Go to [www.simsbury.k12.ct.us](http://www.simsbury.k12.ct.us), click on District/Enrollment/Preschool Census. If you do not have access to a computer, you may phone your information in to the Enrollment Office at 860-323-8140. Please be aware that entering your information into the Census **does not register your child for kindergarten** but is only for planning purposes. You will be given the option to register or withhold your child when the registration process begins.

## Program Teaches Skills to Reduce Anxiety in Kids

On November 5th, Lynn Lyons, co-author of the book, *Anxious Kids Anxious Parents*, spoke to Simsbury parents/guardians and children ages 13+. Her presentation was entitled "Reducing Anxiety: Skills We Can (and SHOULD) Be Teaching Our Children."

Anxiety is all too common, and depression rates in children and teens continue to rise. According to Lyons, untreated anxiety in a child is a top predictor of depression in teens and young adults. Therefore, understanding how these two problems overlap is valuable information for parents and those who work with children.

The author focused on recognizing and interrupting/unhinging the most common anxiety and depression enhancing patterns: reassurance, accommodation, avoidance, and three cognitive habits. She then taught how to adopt a process-based strategic "umbrella approach" that changes both the child and adults' entrenched and damaging patterns of thinking and behavior.

This program was sponsored by Simsbury Public Schools, Simsbury Special Education Parent Teacher Organization (SEPTO), and Community for Care.

## Kurt Dougan Is Simsbury's Teacher of the Year

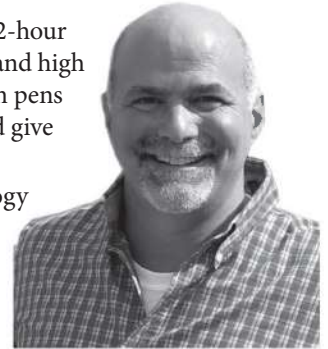
The 2018 Kathleen Magowan Simsbury Teacher of the Year is **Kurt Dougan**, SHS/HJMS Technology Education & Engineering Coordinator.

Dougan has been teaching the Project Lead the Way engineering program since its inception in 2003, and many of his students have gone on to college to study engineering. One of his proudest accomplishments is the "Electrathon" program, which enables students to design, build, and race fully functional electric race cars at Lime Rock Park.

Dougan co-founded SHS's FIRST Robotics team, leading the team to several national competitions. He also supports girls in engineering careers through his participation in the annual "Girls in Engineering Day" each year.

A big believer in giving back, Dougan heads up the annual 22-hour "Freedom Pen-a-Thon" in observance of Veterans Day. Middle and high school students, faculty, and community members craft wooden pens that are delivered to veterans overseas to show appreciation and give them a tool to write letters back home. (See page 4.)

On November 6th, Dougan received a Connecticut Technology and Engineering Education Association (CTEEA) Special Recognition Award. The presenter recognized Kurt's achievement as the Simsbury Teacher of the Year and his contributions as an outstanding Technology Education teacher.

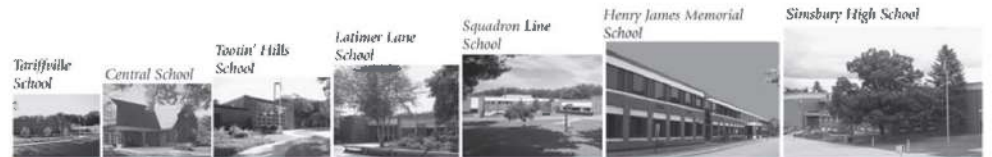


## School Facilities Master Plan & Reconfiguration Study

The school administration has chosen Tecton Architects to develop the School Facilities Master Plan and Reconfiguration Study. As part of the plan, Tecton will prepare a detailed inventory of all buildings and identify capital improvements and maintenance needs over the next 10 years. In addition, the engineering firm of Milone & MacBroom will analyze population projection, residential development, and geographic information about our existing student population. The third portion of the study will be to review alternate school con-

figuration concepts. This information will assist the district in planning for changing demographics, developing strategies to align facilities with enrollment needs, and how to best position resources.

A status report will be provided to the Board of Education this spring regarding initial findings and recommendations relative to immediate needs. Next fall a public input session will be held for the community to consider potential options in school configuration based on the analysis performed by Milone & MacBroom.



DAR Abigail Phelps Chapter Regent Jackie Fenelon hands DCE Director Dave Krum a check to support the department's adult education programming.

## Simsbury Community Shows Support for DCE Adult Education Programs

On November 11th, the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) Abigail Phelps Chapter celebrated its 125 year anniversary, which included a generous donation to Simsbury's Department of Continuing Education (DCE) to support Adult Education naturalization prep classes. DCE Director Dave Krum accepted the donation from chapter Regent Jackie Fenelon, with instructor Mike Angelillo also present. State Mandated Supervisor Paul Kulikowski was unable to attend but wrote, "I wish you all the best as your DAR chapter celebrates 125 years, and I look forward to continuing our community bond."



## Simsbury Public Schools Enrollment Numbers (October 1, 2018)



School	Grade	Enrollment
Simsbury High School	9-12	1,419
Henry James Memorial School	7-8	610
Central School	K-6	378
Latimer Lane School	K-6	408
Squadron Line School	K-6	582
Tariffville School	K-6	248
Tootin' Hills School	K-6	373
<b>TOTAL ELEMENTARY ENROLLMENT</b>		<b>1,989</b>
<b>TOTAL ENROLLMENT AT ALL SCHOOLS</b>		<b>4,018</b>

SOURCE: Board of Education, October 1, 2018 enrollment figures

### Don't Miss SHS's Winter Musical Production!

SHS's Music and Performing Arts Department announces that this year's winter musical is *Kiss Me Kate*. The show will be performed February 1-3 & 8-10. Curtain time is 7PM for evening shows and 2PM for matinees. Ticket information will be posted on the website at [www.simsbury.k12.ct.us](http://www.simsbury.k12.ct.us). Tickets are available at the door.

## Achievements Around the District

● K-12 Director of Music & Performing Arts **Angela Griffin** received the William A. Yandow Educator Award from the Bushnell Center for the Performing Arts for proven leadership with students, parents, colleagues, and community members; contributing to the advancement of curriculum; and displaying exceptional talent and dedication as an educator, administrator, and advocate.

● A total of 16 members of the **Class of 2019** achieved the distinction of being named Commended students, and 7 students were designated Semifinalist, as recognized by the National Merit Scholarship Program and the National Achievement Scholarship Program. (See photo below.) On October 18th, SHS Principal Andy O'Brien held a breakfast with the students, as well as their families and school counselors, to honor the students' achievements.

● Eighth grader **Rachel Zhang** was

recognized by the BOE at its October 23rd meeting for her design of a lion for the new HJMS logo. (See photo below.)

● On November 11th, the DAR Abigail Phelps Chapter bestowed on SHS senior and BOE Student Representative **Valerie Lee** the organization's Good Citizens Award.

● On December 14th, Simsbury schools participated in the Connecticut Children's Medical Center's (CCMC's) annual "PJ Day for the Kids." All students and staff were invited to wear pajamas to school, and student groups, such as student councils, collected donations for CCMC as part of this special spirit day. Since 2011 thousands of children in Connecticut have worn their pajamas to school in support of the brave children fighting cancer and serious illnesses. Over the past six years, PJ Day has raised more than \$178,000 for the Center for Cancer and Blood Disorders at CCMC.



SHS Principal Andy O'Brien and members of the Class of 2019 who achieved Commended or Semifinalist status.



Rachel Zhang displays a sticker incorporating her winning lion design. Her design work was honored by the BOE in October. Accompanying her are HJMS Principal Scott Baker and Assistant Principal Anjanette Belmonte.

## SHS Athletics Earns Michaels Cup

SHS was one of 19 Connecticut athletic programs to be awarded the **Michael's Achievement Cup** for the 2017-18 academic year, the 16th time the school has earned this distinction. The schools were selected by the Michaels Cup Committee for their efforts in launching and implementing the CIAC Class Act Schools sportsmanship program. The Class Act School program, launched in 2016, was designed to empower schools, and specifically students, to enhance sportsmanship.

## HJMS Students Thank Veteran for Service



Simsbury veteran John Fox shares a smile and a handshake with HJMS students (l. to r.) Bernice Gao, Genevieve Night, and Lexi Schwartz for the gift of a handmade quilt made by the FACS Sewing & Quilting Group.

On November 12th, as part of annual Veterans Day activities, HJMS students in Family & Consumer Science (FACS) teacher Diane Rigby's FACS Sewing & Quilting Group ate lunch with and then gave a red, white, and blue quilt to Simsbury veteran John Fox. Assistant Principal Anjanette Belmonte also presented a large pile of handmade cards that had been made in HJ Connections classes for Fox to share with other veterans.

Veterans Day in Simsbury was not always celebrated in schools as much as it is today; in fact, students used to get the day off from school if the holiday fell on a weekday. Several years ago, the district decided that it was important to have school open so that special assemblies and activities designed to educate students about Veterans Day could take place. This has resulted in an increase in awareness about the dedicated service men and women who put themselves in harm's way.



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## Making Connections with the Community

● In honor of Veterans Day, approximately 300 pens were created during the third annual SHS Freedom Pen-a-thon, and over \$7,700 was raised for four veterans organizations. Staff, students, and members of the Simsbury community worked around the clock for 22 hours to craft wooden pens from kits, which were then distributed to service men and women as a reminder of our appreciation for their sacrifices.



● Just before the Thanksgiving holiday, the Simsbury Public Schools collected donations of turkeys, canned food, and money to contribute to Simsbury's Jack Bannan Memorial Turkey Trot. On November 14th, 20 HJMS student volunteers and several Simsbury High School students from the Simsbury A Better Chance (ABC) program helped load up trucks destined for the local food pantry FoodShare, which distributes food to families in need.

*Photos: (Top) Henry James Memorial School student volunteers and Simsbury High School students from the Simsbury A Better Chance (ABC) program take a short break from loading trucks to pose for a photo. (Bottom) Some of the SHS faculty and students who participated in the third annual Freedom Pen-a-Thon gather in the wood and manufacturing shop at the conclusion of the 22-hour event.*

## Keep in Touch

### BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETINGS

The BOE meets on the 2nd and 4th Tuesday of each month at 7PM. Visit our website for upcoming dates and locations.

**VISIT THE SPS WEBSITE!** [www.simsbury.k12.ct.us](http://www.simsbury.k12.ct.us) is the place to go to check out the lunch menu, get sports schedules, or find music and performing arts events. When a hot topic comes to the forefront, you can go to the website to find the latest links, take a survey, or see what principals and other administrators are tweeting about.

**IN CASE OF EMERGENCY...** For weather-related or other emergency announcements, go to [www.simsbury.k12.ct.us](http://www.simsbury.k12.ct.us) and click on the Emergency link located at the top right.