

From the Desk of Stefan Czaporowski, Superintendent of Schools

If you are wondering “Where did the summer go,” I too find it hard to believe that school starts tomorrow. I am happy to report that our schools are ready to open, and I’d like to thank our principals, assistant principals, maintenance staff, administrative assistants, and everyone else who has helped us to be ready for our first day. I would also like to thank Mayor Sullivan, the School Committee, and the City Council for their ongoing support of the Westfield Public Schools. Without their support, the many and new initiatives that we are working on would not be possible. Our district has a very busy year ahead of us. Students in grades 1-12 will start on August 31, while the first day of school for Kindergarten and Fort Meadow Early Childhood Center is September 7.

In 2017-2018, our major areas of focus will be transitioning the elementary schools to a K-4 structure, adding an intermediate school for students in grades 5-6, and establishing a grade 7-8 middle school. In the next few weeks, we will establish a transition committee who will develop a plan for this important work that promotes equal opportunities for all students and maintains a system of ongoing communication to all stakeholders throughout the process. There will be many subcommittees: transportation, special education, and curriculum to name a few, and members of our school community are encouraged to participate. To volunteer to serve on a one of these committee, please e-mail a letter of interest to suptsofc@schoolsofwestfield.org.

This year, our district will continue to focus on providing all students with high-quality learning experiences. Collectively, we are moving towards tailoring the educational experience for every student by embracing individual strengths, needs, and interests. This is a shift from more traditional educational practices, but all evidence suggests that when we do this, we raise both student engagement and student achievement.

Along those lines, we are piloting an alternative secondary school that will be known as the Westfield Alternative Learning Center. This program aims to meet the needs of some of our at-risk students and to decrease student drop outs in our district. Social and emotional learning will be enhanced with the incorporation of Botvin Life Skills into our health classes for students in grades 3-10. This research and evidenced-based program was chosen on the recommendation of the City’s Drug Task Force. Botvin Life Skills focuses on teaching students the necessary skills to resist social pressures to smoke, drink, and use drugs, helping students develop greater self-esteem and self-confidence thus enabling students to effectively cope with anxiety and enhancing cognitive and behavioral competency to reduce and prevent a variety of health risk behaviors.

Lastly, we are making a commitment to provide our students with essential skills for college and career success. The district will introduce Naviance, a web based college and career program, for students in grades 6-12 and their parents this year. Naviance provides students with a variety of features, including college research and matching tools, course planning, career assessment, and surveys to help students connect what they are doing in school to what they would like to do once they complete their education. Naviance is also a beneficial tool for our guidance counselors in tracking the progress of individual students and in promoting collaboration with students and families. In addition, we are expanding opportunities for

students to participate in dual enrollment coursework at local colleges and universities and in job shadowing, internships, work studies, and mentoring services at local businesses.

Finally, as we approach the opening of school, know that Westfield Public Schools does not tolerate hateful words or actions in our classrooms, schools, or on our grounds. Our children watch how we react in these situations. Let's send the right message. If you see this type of behavior, please report it. There is no place for it in our schools. Thank you for your support in ensuring that our students feel safe, respected, and protected in their time with us.

Great things are happening for students in the Westfield Public Schools. We have a truly amazing staff and community that is committed to educating all our children. It is a pleasure to work in such a supportive environment. As we move forward, please remember that my door is open for questions, concerns, and suggestions. Best wishes to all our staff, students, and families on a successful and rewarding year ahead.

Stefan Czaprowski
Superintendent of Westfield Public Schools