

View from the principal's office

As we transition to the second quarter of our school year I thought it an appropriate time to share some thoughts from the first quarter. Hartford students are exploring their learning in many ways – some new and some traditional. As we seek to provide rigorous, unique and lasting opportunities for students I often use these posts to highlight some of the “special” events that happen with and for our students. During the past few weeks Hartford students have:

- taken in a show on Broadway
- performed the National Anthem at the unveiling of the “First Day of Issue Ceremony” commemorating the issue of the *Birds of Winter* stamp collection for the United States Postal Service
- participated in a weekly Sunday evening language collaboration with Dartmouth students during which our students have had the opportunity to communicate in their foreign language with native speakers
- created fashion out of trash and participated in our First Annual Advisory “Trashion Show”
- canoed to an island on the Connecticut River for a hands-on *Lord of the Flies* activity
- prepared to leave for a trip to Eastern Europe that will take place over the Thanksgiving break
- begun planning for this year’s H-Term activities (more to come)
- continuing to prepare for a new tradition – Breakfast for All – a celebration of food and community that is planned for Nov. 16th
- preparing for this year’s musical production, *Once Upon a Mattress* (Nov. 8, 9, 10 @ 7:00 in our auditorium - \$10 / \$7 for students and senior citizens)

In addition to these opportunities our students and teachers continue to partner on what it means to be proficient in specific knowledge and skills.

During my last post I indicated that Hartford, like many schools, is moving toward proficiency-based instruction, assessment, and reporting. This work continues on a daily basis as our staff grow in their understanding and our students find the inherent challenges of a system of assessment that is new to them. In the last *View* I also stated that we will move at a measured pace and we will continue to do so. So much in school is tradition-based, this includes the way(s) we report on student progress. For so many years we have utilized a system of assessments and reporting that, while easy to understand at face value, told us little about what students actually knew or can do. This structure, which has been in place for decades, used letters to represent learning – as schools were inhabited by the “experts,” families who did not truly understand what these letter meant were hesitant to ask, most simply accepted some version of the tradition and did not give it much thought. As we peel back the letter grades we have come to understand that there can be a great deal of mystery to the “grades.” As our technology has improved, and with it on-line student information systems (ours is Infinite Campus), we have the ability to be much more specific in our articulation of a “grade” or assessment. When you look at your child’s

on-line report card available on the parent portal, please keep in mind that the sands of assessment are shifting at our school as they are at most, and we are making every effort to more clearly show what our students know and can do. You may find that this looks different or unexpected; please have a conversation with your child around their assessments and their teachers' practices. Our goal is to tell an honest story regarding our students knowledge and abilities – this story, if it does not do so currently, will eventually be content-specific **and** will include separate reflections on work habits and our transferable skills.

I write with a clear understanding that we have some distance to go – we are committed to telling this story and, as our school community learns together, to do so with a pace that ensures that all of us understand and are engaging in this work with fidelity.

I look forward to the coming months for many reasons, the work of our school is engaging and exciting as we head into the second quarter. To support understanding, I am attaching two hyperlinks (*right hand click, Open hyperlink*) to this document; the first is the Hartford School District's infographic regarding Personalization and Proficiency and the second is a 3 minute video that is one school district's attempt to explain proficiency-based learning. All schools that are engaged in this work are working to find the best way to integrate proficiency-based instruction, assessment, and reporting in their communities. My goal in sharing this is not to suggest that this mirrors Hartford's process but rather to provide information about the use of proficiencies. I hope these help bring clarity to these practices.

Thanks for reading,

Nelson Fogg
Principal

https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B2ullsbgClG_UXk4Vi1iTFEtLUNQMlhwQQ01SX2Q4SmJRNWVR/view?usp=sharing

<https://youtu.be/XvyT2v4L-tw>