

## Notes from the Desk of the Superintendent

We opened the month on Nov. 2 with a budget meeting for 2010-2011, followed by a meeting in Middletown regarding the state's application for "Race to the Top" grant funding. Ansonia is one of 20 school districts working with the Commissioner of Education and his Board to prepare Connecticut's application for federal money that could bring significant changes to the school day/year for our students. One of the focuses will be on the high school level in an attempt to lower the dropout rate and increase student achievement and post-secondary success. Nov. 2 concluded with the AHS Junior Ring Dance, which was held at Villa Biana Restaurant. It was nice to see our students dressed up and enjoying themselves in a social environment.

Our schools were closed on Nov. 3 while teachers, tutors and paraprofessionals participated in a full day of professional development, which focused on using non-fiction writing to enhance learning. This is first in a series of workshops on research-based strategies for increasing student achievement that we will be conducting over the next few years.

After months of work, we presented Ansonia's District Improvement Plan to the Commissioner and the State Board of Education in Hartford on Nov. 4. I was accompanied by Diane Conway, Assistant Superintendent, and John Lawlor, President of the Ansonia Board of Education. I am happy to report that Ansonia's plan was unanimously approved. Now, the "real" work begins as we implement the changes!

Upon our return from Hartford, I attended a meeting with Bobby Martino, the curriculum coordinator in Orange, who addressed several of our elementary school administrators about how to align our K-2 report cards to the Grade Level Expectations in the subject areas. Our report cards, which will be issued in December, will reflect changes.

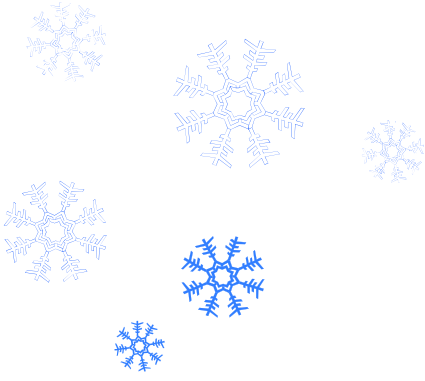
All of our schools honored our country's veterans in various activities on Veterans' Day, Nov. 11. Mead School again sponsored a powerful program featuring patriotic music, while Prendergast School honored one of its own, third grade teacher Len Adams, who served in Iraq five years ago. Art teacher Danine Curtis constructed a wall-sized flag made out of stars, one from each of the school's 820 children. A sign stating, "To Our Own Mr. Adams: Thanks! We Salute You" was presented to him in front of his class in the lobby of the school.

Ansonia High School announced in late October that it was establishing a Military Wall of Honor to recognize AHS graduates who are presently serving in the active military, active reserve or active guard units. AMS students posted information in the lobby about Veterans Day. In addition, representatives of all four schools read essays in the city's annual Veterans Day ceremony, held in Veterans' Park: Gianna Crisante and Travis Gray, Prendergast School; Kevin Rascoe and Lake Thornburn, Mead School; Brianna Dainiak, Ansonia Middle; and Diane Garzon, Ansonia High.

On Nov. 13, Dr. Mitchell represented Ansonia at a follow-up meeting for the "Race to the Top" Grant.

The Ansonia School Readiness Program sponsored the second annual Literacy Fair, for children ages 2-8 and their parents, on Nov. 14 at Prendergast School. It was a successful event, which featured free books, literacy stations for families, a special appearance by Robert Rivest, a visit with our Literacy Bear, Mr. Read Daily, and English as a Second Language/GED/Family Learning Program information.

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I met with the school principals on Nov. 16 and Nov. 18 to review their curriculum goals for the year. On Nov. 17, our administrators continued its professional development on efficacy training with Patrick Flynn of ACES. This PD, which is based on National School Reform work, will continue throughout the year.

We kicked off the start of our new after school program for 100 students in Grades 6-8 on Nov. 4, followed by a steering committee meeting on Nov. 18 and an Open House on Nov. 19. The Boys & Girls Club, which opened a new facility in Ansonia this year, is our major partner for the after school program, as well as Valley Regional Adult Education.

I attended the annual CABA/CAPSS conference in Mystic on Nov. 19 and 20, which was entitled "Making the Right Choices: Focus on Student Learning." I gained valuable insights and resources on topics such as 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills, legal and legislative issues impacting public education, and a role-playing session on Boards of Education. The keynote addresses were given by Salome Thomas-EL, principal of a public charter school in Philadelphia; and David Pogue, a personal-technology columnist for the *New York Times*.

Our administrators met with Lol Fearon of the State Department of Education on Nov. 23 to learn what is needed in order to align their School Improvement Plans to the new District Improvement Plan.

Starting at the end of November, I started receiving a weekly "H1N1 Situation Report," which is being written by the Connecticut Department of Public Health and Emergency Management and

elected officials, emergency management directors, health departments, police and fire chiefs, and other emergency services organizations. At the end of November, the report stated that there were no schools closed the week of Nov. 20-25. We will continue to post relevant information on our website, [www.ansoniamn.org](http://www.ansoniamn.org).

The month ended on Nov. 30 with an unexpected closing of Ansonia High School. One of our HVAC system controls was damaged by water from a pressure relief valve, following a power surge late on the night of Nov. 27. We could not get the heating system repaired by the start of school on Nov. 30 and sent students home at 9:30 a.m., as the temperatures in classrooms reached 98 degrees. Repairs were made in the afternoon, and the building reopened on Dec. 1.

Finally, I would like to report on the next date of my Community Meetings with the Public:

\* **Wednesday, Dec. 16** from 6-7 p.m. at Ansonia High School—prior to the start of the Winter Concert by the AHS Music Department. Please stop in to see me!

Sincerely,

Carol Merlone, Ansonia Superintendent of Schools

