

Points of Pride

Beginning in 1998, we introduced the phrase, “our primary purpose is to improve student achievement,” into the lexicon of the Bethel Public Schools. That improvement meant more than an upward trend in test scores, which we have achieved. The Board of Education determined that one of its primary responsibilities was to provide opportunities to our students and staff to experience personal growth and to build upon skills in arenas outside of the regular classroom. Expanding our programs meant that Bethel’s children could find a niche upon which to build a future or to remediate skills essential to be competitive in later life.

To know where we should be going as an institution, it is essential to understand where we have been and what programs are currently in place. The following programmatic additions, improvements, or recognitions to the Bethel Public Schools were approved by voters via successful budget referenda since 1999 or through other means:

The Board of Education earned *Connecticut Board of Education Excellence in Leadership Award* in 01, 02, 03, 04, 05, and 07 after meeting the strenuous qualifications for this recognition.

The Bethel Public Schools website was awarded the *Best Educational Website in Connecticut* by the Connecticut Association of Boards of Education.

The Superintendent of Schools has proposed to the Board the lowest educational budget in the region for 6 of the last 9 fiscal years.

The Board of Education, since 1999, has undertaken a regular textbook replacement cycle that ensures that our texts are up-to-date learning tools for our students.

The Board of Education approved an innovative computer lease program that ensures that our students and staff have up-to-date instructional equipment while providing a steady and reliable financial component in the budget process.

The Board of Education approved the development and execution of an EMT course that will annually prepare 16 Bethel High students to serve as certified Emergency Medical Technicians to this community.

The Board of Education approved the Educational Specifications and the BHS Renovation Plans and was successful in campaigning for 2 referenda to construct a renovated school facility.

The Board of Education approved the expansion of the Advanced Placement program from 6 to 13 courses offered and from 80 to 230 participants at Bethel High.

The Board of Education approved the development of the Bethel Education Foundation under Dr. Jordan’s guidance. The Foundation contributed \$15,000 to fund teacher grants in 2007.

The Board of Education mandated a graduation requirement for Bethel High that includes 60 hours of community service plus an internship, a virtual class, or a college class taken during high school.

Channel 26 was started and then programming expanded, making it the only educational network in the region to routinely feature the work of K-12 students. Later, studios were outfitted in each school to allow for local school productions. The station has won numerous awards.

The introduction of the 8 period-day at BHS gave students more curricular opportunities and a better pathway to graduation and to college.

BHS was removed from NEASC “warning” after 147 academic recommendations were cited in the 1998 accreditation site visit. Only one issue, the facility, caused the school to be placed on probation.

Bethel High introduced a Naval ROTC program that has created outstanding young men and women and has produced eight BHS alumni who have been nominated to attend service academies. The unit was presented the Distinguished Unit Award in 2004, 2005, 2006, and 2007.

Bethel High students enjoy a WCSU tuition discount of 40% when enrolling in university courses as a junior or senior. Faculty also earns a tuition discount for Masters Degree coursework.

Beginning in 2007 Bethel High students were eligible to take course work through Virtual High School and through the CT Virtual High School.

Period by period attendance began with the installation of an advanced software package at Bethel High School. This package allowed the administration to impose greater accountability for students.

Pay-to-Play was eliminated in 1999 and again in 2006. This move opened up opportunities for many students and decreased the percentage working long hours after school.

At the request of parents and students, BHS added lacrosse and swimming as competitive sports for men and for women athletes.

In 2006 and again in 2007, the Bethel Public Schools was selected as one the *Best 100 in Music Education* in the United States based upon Board of Education support, program quality, and enrollments.

The string orchestra program at Berry/Rockwell started in 1999 with just 60 children in third grade. Now the program boasts over 450 children enrolled in grades 3-11.

School musicals were begun at Bethel Middle and Bethel High Schools. Each musical play sells out the house and includes hundred of students in the production.

A revamped summer school started in 1999 with 35 children. In 2007, the program enrolled 804 children in enhancement and remedial classes making it the largest such program in the State.

The *Summer Counts* program in 2007 invited all incoming kindergarten students to summer school for two or four weeks to ensure students will have a positive acclimation to school.

A partnership with Bethel area pre-schools focuses on the sharing of expectations for incoming pre-school students, improved kindergarten achievement, and staff development for pre-schools.

With the completion of the Berry School renovation project, it became a lighthouse facility and provided a new home for the *Circle of Friends* pre-school.

Circle of Friends expanded the specialized programs available for preschool students as well as the number of openings for typically developing peers, including opportunities for more families to access the program.

The Family Literacy program strengthens the connections between school and the community for our English as a Second Language parents as they acquire the English language in our evening program.

Kindergarten Buddies is as an intervention program which provides extended instructional time for our struggling kindergarten students.

ESL Kindergarten Buddies is an intervention program which provides extended instructional time for kindergarten students who are not proficient in the English language.

The *Guiding Hands* program invites senior citizens into the primary schools to provide one-on-one attention and guidance to our youngest students. It annually attracts 20 seniors into our schools.

The Bethel Schools were the first in Fairfield County to launch an email notification system to parents to keep them informed of routine news and information related to individual schools.

The *VoiceReach* phone notification system to parents was the first launched in Fairfield County by the Bethel Schools in the wake of the Columbine Tragedy. The system allows schools to contact parents in real time during emergency situations.

The Bethel Schools launched a homework assignment website *Homework.net* for students and parents as a vehicle for parents to monitor their children's assignments on a routine basis.

Bethel Schools are connected through a recently upgraded Wide Area Network thus improving learning opportunities, network speed and band width for each school facility.

Students in Bethel Middle School began using iPods, Palm Pilots, and Moodle as part of the *Digital Student* course in the seventh and eighth grade.

A collaborative Science Fair between WCSU and Bethel Middle School allows our young scientists to have their research critiqued by students and faculty from the university.

Budget Sense, a district financial management software package, was installed to give the administration greater and timelier oversight of school expenses.

The installation of professional development tracking software, *Protraxx*, greatly simplified the required tracking of CEU credits for professional staff and allowed for the development and publication of in-service courses in a standardized format.

The Special Education Department implemented a web-based application for developing and monitoring students' Individualized Education Plans and a more informative parent progress reporting system.

Comprehensive transition services preparing high school special education students for adult life are available at BHS as well as in community-based training sites.

Students with disabilities are afforded opportunities to participate with their typical peers in social inclusion activities through the award-winning BMS Bridges Program and the BHS Friendship Club.

The PM Studies Program at Bethel High School offers the first alternative schedule, small group instruction option for students, now with the opportunity for students take up to 7 credits a year.

The Steps toward Educational Progress Program at BHS offers special education students academic counseling, and transition services within the comprehensive high school setting.

A multidisciplinary Bethel Public Schools' Assistive Technology Team is available to evaluate students with disabilities for low and high technology solutions to support their learning.

A district Board Certified Behavior Analyst supports programming for students with autism.

Community parents with concerns about their preschool-aged child's development have the opportunity for their child to participate in monthly preschool screening sessions and to consult with the Circle of Friends multidisciplinary team.

Report Cards for K-12 were redesigned to reflect a standards based approach and to provide more information to parents related to student performance.

Beginning in 2007, the K-5 schools provided after-school instruction in Spanish and French to those families interested.