



NEW HAVEN PUBLIC SCHOOLS



Great things are happening at New Haven Public Schools

November 1, 2019 – November 13, 2019

We believe that all kids can learn, achieve, and rise to a bright future. Our purpose is to provide an outstanding education that extends beyond graduation and prepares our students to be the next generation of leaders, innovators and problem-solver.

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Four Schools Try Play-Based Learning

by CHRISTOPHER PEAK | Oct 28, 2019 6:42 am

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CHRISTOPHER PEAK PHOTO: Students play house at Conte-West Hills.

Recess is no longer the only time New Haven's students will get to play around.

After [a successful test run](#) this summer, administrators are planning to take a freer form of teaching, known as [play-based learning](#), to Pre-K to Grade 3 classrooms throughout the district within the next six years.

They'll start out this year with pre-kindergarten classes at Bishop Woods Architecture & Design Magnet School, Columbus Family Academy, Strong 21st Century Communications Magnet School (soon to be renamed Barack H. Obama Magnet University School), and Dr. Reginald Mayo Early Learning Center.

(Conte-West Hills Magnet School already has its own form of play-based learning in place, developed with the [Seedlings Educators Collaborative](#).)



Pamela Augustine-Jefferson.

Pamela-Augustine Jefferson, the district’s new director of early learning programs, announced that roll-out at a recent meeting of the Board of Education’s Teaching & Learning Committee in the district’s Meadow Street headquarters.

She said the district is still trying to line up funding, probably through [the state’s Alliance District grant](#), that will allow it continue working with [the Gesell Institute of Child Development](#) that helped set up the summer school pilot, especially on training a new set of coaches.

In play-based learning, teachers come up with hands-on activities that indirectly get at fundamental math and writing lessons, rather than drilling them through worksheets. The teacher becomes more like a “facilitator,” Augustine-Jefferson said.

“The big piece is wondering questions, like ‘What is home?’ or ‘Why do we need water?’ Then they do open-ended work to explore those things” in a way that’s cross-curricular and standards-based, Augustine-Jefferson added. “We want them to turn kids on to learning, to be problem-solvers. We want the scores too [because] that is a measure of how effective that is.”

It’s not supposed to be a free-for-all with a box of toys in the middle of the room, but a guided pursuit of what kids are curious about knowing about the big theme. That’s why Acting Superintendent Iline Tracey said she prefers to call it an “inquiry” or “exploration.”

Whatever the name, experts say it's a more developmentally appropriate model that develops creativity and encourages collaboration, which can in turn build up language by talking with classmates.



Fatima tests if objects sink or float.

The model isn't entirely new. Play was common in kindergarten up until [the Bush-era No Child Left Behind Act](#) shifted the emphasis to preparing for [annual high-stakes tests](#). At that point in New Haven, they "literally" took the sandboxes out of kindergarten classes, remembered Keisha Redd-Hannans, the district's assistant superintendent.

The challenge for administrators now will be figuring out how to merge those two ideas. Is there a way students can pick out what they want to do, while still following [mandatory Common Core curricular standards](#)? Augustine-Jefferson said it might be "a little messy at first" as the district builds its own model.

"It doesn't mean that we don't have to teach the foundational skills, but we don't want [guided play] to be just an hour in the day," she said. "We want it to be something that we do."

The district conducted its first training for all pre-kindergarten teachers last month, and it plans to hold a more in-depth session for the four elementary schools early next month.



Teachers help a student make a working sailboat.

The big questions, so far, have been what materials teachers need for the stations that will explore facets of the main theme, said Mary Derwin, the district's school readiness director.

Susan DeNicola, Strong School's principal, said she signed her school up, because they're "looking forward to seeing kids explore education from a different aspect," not just with pencils and paper, but with "a little more of their creative abilities."

Tags: [play-based learning](#), [Pamela Augustine-Jefferson](#), [Bishop Woods School](#), [Columbus Family Academy](#), [Strong School](#), [Dr. Reginald Mayo Early Learning School](#)

Beeddikulus Spellers Bee-Muse And Bee-Dazzle

[Lucy Gellman](#) | October 28th, 2019



Team Beeddikulus: Amanda Wang, Arin Bhandari, and Nana Dondorful-Amos. Lucy Gellman Photos.

It all came down to *numnah*. Then just as quickly as Team Beeddikulus had out-spelled the competition in its first round, it had made history.

That was the scene Friday night at the eighth annual [New Haven Reads Spelling Bee](#), held at the Yale School of Management for the third year in a row. Over two word-packed hours, 42 teams of three competed for the title of 2019 spelling champion, held last year by a team of [fierce Yale Linguists](#).

For the first time ever, three high school students from Hopkins School took first place. The winning word was [numnah](#), which the Oxford English Dictionary defines as “a pad, typically made of sheepskin or foam, which is placed under a saddle.”

Over 250 New Haveners attended the event, which raised \$34,000 for the local literacy organization. As in previous years event was organized in large part by New Haven Reads Spelling Bee co-chairs Ellen Kannatt and Jill Savitt. WTNH Anchors Ann Nyberg and Keith Kountz served as emcees.



“All the children we work with are children with dreams and goals of their own,” said New Haven Reads Director Kirsten Levinsohn Friday night. “Just like us ... all of our kids want to learn to read. Nobody wants to be illiterate.”

“New Haven Reads is so amazingly successful because all kinds of people from all over the community come together for a common cause: to support our city’s youngest readers,” she

added. “Let’s continue to work together to help all of our children learn to read, so that their dreams can come true as well.”

Since the organization’s [humble beginnings in 2001](#), Levinsohn said it has been able to tutor 4,000 students with the help of 3,500 volunteer tutors. Through after-school programming and semiannual new book giveaways, New Haven Reads has also given away more than two million books.

But the organization is struggling to expand its footprint in a landscape of continued illiteracy and kids who read well behind grade level. While New Haven Reads tutors 550 kids a week, an all-time high of 234 more remain on the waitlist. Friday, a few attendees gleefully raised their hands and signed up to tutor before the end of the evening.



Joe Ugly

In many ways, this year’s competition marked a bee of firsts. As he swooped in in a homemade black robe and black-rimmed glasses—think Albus Dumbledore meets Judge Judy chic—Ugly Radio host and founder and WNH Community Radio pundit Joe Ugly took the place of word master, standing before “swarms” of teams with a fearsome-looking booklet of words.



Swarm Four

Behind him, judges included some familiar faces—Project Longevity’s [Stacy Spell](#) and State Sen. Gary Winfield among others—but also new judge [Martha Cedeno-Ross](#), community engagement officer with the Yale Police Department.

It laid a fresh kind of groundwork for a new team from Hopkins, composed of two freshman and one sophomore all dressed as characters from Harry Potter. As they took the stage in the third round, members Amanda Wang, Arin Bhandari, and Nana Dondorful-Amos kept their cool, surveying their competition.

There were teams from High School in the Community, Hamden High School, Sacred Heart Academy, and Engineering and Science University Magnet School (ESUMS). They sailed through words including ritual, amnesty, symmetry, and pterodactyl, ultimately taking the round.

“We’re just having a good time,” said Bhandari, who has competed in the National Spelling Bee twice and is now a freshman at Hopkins. “The best part is the teamwork.”



Future Leaders of Yale (FLY) members of Denvall Lawrence, Alyssa Antunes and Marinda Monfilston of The Buzz In Wakanda.

Other first-timers came out for the fun of the bee. Before they headed to the stage in the first swarm of the evening, Denvall Lawrence, Alyssa Antunes and [Marinda Monfilston](#) of The Buzz In Wakanda showed off their skills with careful makeup, glittering costumes and delicate bee wings that had been painted and decorated with cardboard letters. All friends through the [Future Leaders of Yale](#), they said they came out not specifically to win—which they did not—but to represent FLY and have fun.

Elsewhere in the audience, veteran spellers Linda Goodman, Jill Jensen and [Suzanne Serviss](#) had returned to the event as the R BEE Gs, three silver-headed, gavel-wielding justices who knew their way around the alphabet. Sort of. All current and retired clinical social workers, they said they also do the bee each year not to win, but to relax together as friends while supporting literacy. This year, the team was supported by [Kenneth Bronson Architects](#).

“We just love New Haven, and it’s a way to support the kids,” said Serviss, who laughingly added that the first thing the team was planning to do was sack [Justice Brett Kavanaugh](#).



Clockwise from top: Emily Chew and Thomas Breen prepare to spell for the EniBEEs of the BEEple, Bee True To Your School members Jeinilee Salame, Airiqa Hoheb and Eman Severance, The R BEE Gs, and the words as they are marched out.

Not far from where they chatted, returning and new teams from High School in the Community came with their A game, then stayed to root on their teachers after the student round didn't go as they'd hoped.

Back for her final spelling bee before graduating, senior Emma Bender of The HSC Spellurz said that she returned for the competition after loving it last year. While her teammate Zuhah Syed will also be graduating this year, a new teammate named Benjamin de Blasio said he's now inspired to find a way to volunteer despite an already busy schedule.

Beside them, spelling newbies from Bee True to Your School had come out for the fun of the evening.



“It’s just a new experience for us,” said Airiqa Hoheb, a sophomore at HSC. “It makes us come out of our comfort zones.”

“I just feel like it was the height of fun,” added Jeinilee Salame, a junior at the school. “You win some, you lose some. But we’ll be better next year.”

Great News *from* Wilbur Cross High School

- Girls Soccer team did a great job this season.
- Katherine Van Tassel was voted on by the league coaches to the SCC All-Second Team last night. She was named as one of the top 24 players in the league.
- Charlotte Buterbaugh and Nile Lee earned honorable mention recognition.
- My Movie Making students and Mr. DeLucia's acting students were asked to film a short promotion for The School for Ethical Education's PSA contest.

We filmed several versions of this with different combinations of actors and ended up with this promo. It's less than a minute.

<https://youtu.be/vJpjsj5Ip0o>

- **CONGRATULATIONS SOPHIE EDELSTEIN**, who has been awarded a renewable four-year scholarship by the 2019 Milton Fisher Scholarship for Innovation and Creativity.

Barnard Environmental Magnet School



Operation Giveback - great things happening at Barnard... Fourth grade is doing a study on our oceans... and what they've discovered in their research has become an environmental ongoing project...



Below are pictures From our last cleanup of pollution that kills countless wildlife
Dyanan Sousa, 4th Grade Teacher at Barnard "chool focuses on an environmental theme...

So environmental projects incorporated into the curriculum through integration of reading, writing, science, social studies, and math is key! Besides my Operation Giveback—Save Our Oceans, which is part of our fourth grade focus of oceanology.

In researching, my kids realized the huge problem that faces our ocean and is killing it's wildlife, is plastic pollution. So we contacted 4Ocean and set out to clean up the watersheds around our school... Including West River.

My Operation Givebacks started a few years ago when we were talking about “what makes someone a hero“ In their research of organizations that help others in our community, we decided to show our appreciation by “giving back” to them.



Last year channel 8 news came to our school to recognize our “operation give back—Care packages for the homeless shelters”.

We also have an ongoing “operation give back “saving gorillas one bottle at a time!”, where we are partnering with Ellen DeGeneres wildlife fund, through our donations of bottles and cans, that we redeem (the whole school has joined us on our bandwagon) to support these endangered mountain gorillas of Rwanda.

My goal as an educator is to truly empower my students to believe that one person can change the world! Every year I have an entire classroom filled with the future leaders, the future environmentalists, the future educators, future doctors, scientists, news reporters, etc., so when my students graduate 4th grade, they are empowered to know that they and their actions can truly make a difference making our world a better place!

Kindergarten is also working with your meteorologist and he is coming to Mrs. Giusti's room to inspire future meteorologist of tomorrow"!



Cross Soccer Girls Team Making Strives



Girls' soccer players from Wilbur Cross High School earned All-Conference recognition by the SCC. The first and second teams were voted by the league coaches.

The girls were honored during halftime of Wednesday night's SCC Soccer Championship game at West Haven High School.

All-SCC First-Team

Katherine Van Tassel, Sophomore Captain

All-SCC Second Team

Charlotte Buterbaugh, Freshman

Nile Lee, Senior Captain

Davis Street Sudantes Participate in “El Día De Los Muertos”

Seventh grade Spanish class students from Davis Academy at the Eli Whitney Museum during El Dia de los Muertos (the Day of the Dead). During this field trip students learned about how Mexicans remember their loved ones during this holiday, and created a project by using a motor and a battery.





Davis Street at Collado's

During Hispanic Heritage Month seventh grade students in Spanish class visited Collado Restaurant where they were able to order their food in Spanish and try/enjoy Hispanic food.

They had an amazing time, and they were very proud of ordering their food in Spanish.

As a foreign language teacher I strongly believe that field trips are great opportunities for students to produce the target language and to make connections with the target language and to make connections with the target culture, in this case the Hispanic culture.

HSC at New Haven Reads Spelling Bee



