

Hello! West Hartford

The School-Community Connection

What? **Hello! West Hartford** is a town-wide initiative. Put simply, its purpose is to say “Hello and Welcome!” to all and build bridges between community members. Within the school system translates to students, parents, teachers and administrators. **Hello! West Hartford** is a brand new community initiative involving town governance, schools, the business community and the community at large.

A project of West Hartford’s new **Community Connections** group, it is supported by town governance-- including Mayor Scott Slifka, Town Manager Ron Van Winkle, School Superintendent Karen List, School Board Member Terry Schmitt, and Celebrate West Hartford’s Helen Rubino-Turco.

Why? **Hello! WH** is a direct outgrowth of the March 2010 Community Conversation initiated by Karen List. The purpose of the initiative is to help community members bridge gaps, and to celebrate the diverse make-up of the community. The ultimate goal is to create an atmosphere of greater inclusiveness and belonging in West Hartford. Karen, along with Cheryl Curtis, district ESOL/Bilingual Coordinator, and a growing number of school principals and teachers are excited about how **Hello! WH** can help make this happen.

Your school’s participation in **Hello! WH** will connect your school community to the larger community effort to recognize, value and celebrate our differences, including the many languages we speak. Your participation will give students, parents and staff a a novel way to think about language and, may foster discussions about heritage, history, identity and connections amid difference. You’ll be saying to your students and families—the language(s) we speak are part of who we are. By learning a new language and valuing one another’s mother tongues, we can both share who we are and learn about others.

Participation in this initiative will give your students a concrete lesson in Civics. **Hello! WH** will be covered by local television, radio and newspapers, and promoted in local businesses. **Hello! WH** will also have a booth at Celebrate West Hartford. Getting your school involved will model for students the fun and importance of community engagement.

When and How?

During the first week of each month, you, your ESOL teacher, Media Specialist or designated staff will learn of the new language of the month. Signs downloaded from can be posted in the main office, classrooms, hallways, anywhere in and around the school. Throughout the month encourage staff and students to greet one another and visitors in the month’s language. The school might also consider planning some kind of program revolving around the month’s language/culture.

Logistics

An email from the West Hartford ListServ with subject line Hello! West Hartford [month] will be sent to everyone on the town’s ListServ. (If you are not currently on West Hartford’s List Serv, see the instructions below for signing up.)

Open the ListServ message and click on the link to the **Hello! West Hartford** website. Click the ‘download the banner’ icon, print and post several signs. The signs (8 ½” x 11” sheet of paper folded in half) will bear the greeting “Hello and Welcome” in the language-

of-the-month. The website will have links to audio and/or video to hear a correct pronunciation of the greeting.

That's all you have to do to participate--print and post signs and encourage office staff, teachers and students to use the greeting all month long to greet one another and visitors in and outside of school.

What else?

Become a Host School of the Month and appear on West Hartford community television, WHC-TV's, Be-the-Media program. Even if your school is not a formal Be-the-Media site, Be-the-Media staff will work with interested staff and students to produce a fun and creative piece highlighting your school and the language connection.

Use the "Do You Know?" facts about the featured language found on our website () in your monthly newsletters and student assemblies and class discussion.

Tell the larger community how you are celebrating the language-of-the-month by blogging about your involvement. This blog space will be on Hello! West Hartford's website ().

How to Subscribe to West Hartford's List Serve – It's easy!

To sign-up go to www.west-hartford.com/home/listserver_template.asp

Simply enter your name, address and email address. Select one or more of the six categories of notices you would like to receive. Click submit. In about a week your subscription will take affect.

"Privacy Notice: Your personal information and email address will not be shared or sold to any commercial business or organization without your permission."

THANK YOU IN ADVANCE FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION!

For more information please contact Community Connections

860-810-0401 (Bepsie Perry)