

X.A.

**CONNECTICUT STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
Hartford**

TO: State Board of Education
FROM: Dr. Dianna R. Wentzell, Commissioner of Education
DATE: May 2, 2018
SUBJECT: The Red, White and Blue Schools Program

Executive Summary

Introduction

In June 2016, the Secretary of the State Denise Merrill and Education Commissioner Dianna R. Wentzell announced the launch of the Red, White and Blue Schools program. Co-sponsored by the Office of the Secretary of the State and the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE), this initiative promotes civic understanding and civic practices. Elementary schools, middle schools, and high schools are eligible to participate and be recognized as Red, White and Blue schools.

The Red, White and Blue Schools program was created to increase the innovative teaching of civics and government in Connecticut and promote the innovative, multidisciplinary teaching of civics as described in the State Board of Education (Board) adopted 2015 Connecticut Elementary and Secondary Social Studies Frameworks. The major aim of the Red, White and Blue Schools program is to emphasize the importance of **active** citizenship and informed action. In Red, White and Blue schools students study local issues, plan solutions, and implement their plans. Students engaged in civic education is the heart of what the Red, White and Blue Schools program wishes to accomplish.

At the beginning of each school year the theme of the Red, White and Blue Schools program is announced. Rubrics describing the essential components of that year's program are placed on the Social Studies page of the CSDE Web site. An introductory workshop is held to promote the program within districts. Sample lessons and essential resources are posted to the Web site for schools to access. A webinar is held in the middle of the school year to discuss specific components of the program requirements and to answer questions about the program. At the end of the year, a recognition ceremony is held to publically honor schools and/or districts recognized as Red, White and Blue Schools.

History/Background

The inaugural Red, White and Blue Schools program occurred during the 2016-17 school year and the theme was “Teaching the 2016 Elections.” In April 2017, nine schools and two districts submitted a summary of the activities related to this theme. Personnel from the CSDE and the Office of the Secretary of the State carefully evaluated the materials submitted to determine which schools and districts would be designated as Red, White and Blue Schools. The following district and schools were recognized as having an outstanding program in the 2016-17 year:

-) South Windsor Public School District (K-12);
-) Enfield High School (9-12); and
-) Region #5/Amity (6-12).

The following six schools were recognized for their programs:

-) E.O. Smith High School, Storrs;
-) Lincoln Middle School, Meriden;
-) Norwich Free Academy, Norwich;
-) Tolland High School, Tolland;
-) Westhill High School, Stamford; and
-) Windsor High School, Windsor.

The theme for the 2017-18 school year is “Student Engagement at the Local Level.” To date, approximately 20 schools have expressed interest in participating in the 2017-18 Red, White and Blue program. The recognition ceremony for the program will occur in June 2018.

Next Steps

As clearly stated in the 2015 Connecticut Elementary and Secondary Social Studies Frameworks, civic engagement is one of the most essential tasks of social studies education. The Red, White and Blue Schools program strongly encourages students to be actively engaged in civic life throughout every stage of their K-12 education. It is important that students learn not only about the governmental structure in the city or town in which they live but also how to create change in their local community.

The Office of the Secretary of the State and the CSDE Academic Office will continue to meet on a regular basis to promote and refine the Red, White and Blue program. The tentative theme for the 2018-19 school year is “The Legislative Process in Connecticut” and a goal for 2018-19 is to increase elementary school participation.

Prepared by: Stephen Armstrong
Education Consultant, Academic Office

Approved by: Melissa K. Wlodarczyk Hickey, Ed.D.
Reading/Literacy Director