

# Extended time provides enrichment

By Mark Benigni and Daniel Coffey

On August 29th, as we welcome back our students and families, Casimir Pulaski Elementary School will begin its extended learning day for all of their students. This exciting opportunity has been made possible through a three-year grant of almost a half-million dollars awarded to the Meriden Federation of Teachers (MFT) by the American Federation of Teachers (AFT). This year, Meriden is one of five cities to receive this prestigious award. Past recipients include Chicago, Los Angeles, Philadelphia, Boston, St Louis and Denver.

With momentum growing across the country to extend student learning beyond the typical 180 six-and-a-half-hour school day, the AFT has provided the MFT and the Meriden Public Schools with this terrific opportunity. All Pulaski students will begin each school day at 7:30 a.m. with a healthy breakfast and a creative learning program. Pulaski will use the extended time for: engaging enrichment; rigorous academics; focused achievement goals; enhanced school culture; and individualized student support.

The extended day enrichment activities will focus on science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM), literacy and healthy living. Hands-on activities, interactive experiences, fitness, and nutrition will be the cornerstones of our new program at Pulaski. This extended time will provide students with the equivalent of 40 additional school days. According to the National Center on Time and Learning, "More time affords opportunities to expose students to

the world outside their schools and communities, to build new skills and interests that they will pursue throughout their lives, and to offer activities that build a strong school culture — one that values and supports learning." A terrific team of dedicated teachers and community partners will facilitate the new extended day.

The Women and Families Center, Meriden YMCA, and Meriden Children First Initiative will work with us to support our creative programming options. We also anticipate receiving professional support from the National Center on Time and Learning headquartered in Boston, Massachusetts. While an extended learning day

is certainly innovative and desirable, it is the flex-time teacher scheduling that will assure program sustainability and long-term success. The grant provides opportunities for our extended day planning team to work collaboratively on designing an innovative teacher flex schedule. Project Director Christine Winiarski stated, "our school will be a model school not only for our district but nationwide as we improve our practices to maximize student achievement."

The Pulaski facility is in the midst of some major upgrades to support this new initiative. A state-of-the-art technology center will feature 75 new computers, two smart boards, and numerous new software technologies. The gymnasium will be painted and receive a new wood parquet floor, and general maintenance will continue throughout the summer months. As we move forward, we will keep you informed through direct mailings, our school and district websites, automated notification service system messages, cable access and personal communication.

This grant will allow us to have the time to provide a well-rounded education that readies our students for success in college and careers. Please join us as we Dream, Believe, and Innovate! We are confident that our students will be learning in fun, engaging and educational settings. Thank you for all of your support. Congratulations Meriden! Congratulations Pulaski!

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