



*Clear Paths. Bright Futures. No Limits.*

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Dear Students, Parents and Guardians,

I am writing to inform you of an exciting new change in the WHPS school counseling department at the high school level. Beginning in the Fall of 2016, we will be adjusting our service delivery model to better meet the needs of our students and community. Our school counseling program supports individual student development across academic, personal-social, and college-career domains. Recent changes in national and state school counseling standards now outline specific mindsets and behaviors that are necessary to advance development in these areas. Further infusion of these elements into our program has provided an opportunity to evaluate our overall delivery model, create new programming for students, and adjust our department structure to strengthen our services.

Currently, Conard High School has eight counselors, whose caseloads are split alphabetically and include students in grades 9-12. Beginning next Fall, Ms. Courtney Heitson and Mrs. Kate Ford-Deane will become our 9<sup>th</sup> grade counselors and focus solely on Freshmen students. We feel this allows us to better address the critical transition needs of students moving from middle to high school each year. Additionally, it presents an opportunity to design new Freshman-specific programming intent on creating the foundation for mindsets and behaviors that facilitate high school success. The remaining six counselors will maintain caseloads of students in grades 10-12. This too presents an excellent opportunity to expand our existing college and career programming, in a more defined continuum, to better prepare students for life after high school.

This decision comes after two years of research into best practice, site visits to districts employing progressive service models, evaluation of the needs we see exhibited from our own diverse student population, and a desire to provide *the best* school counseling program that we can for our community. While overall caseload sizes will remain relatively stable, we realize this change requires that current students of Ms. Heitson and Mrs. Ford-Deane be assigned to new counselors next year. These changes in assignment will be communicated later this spring, with ample time for conversation and connection with the new counselor prior to the summer if necessary. For our current Juniors, Ms. Heitson and Mrs. Ford-Deane will still provide your college recommendation in the Fall. We'll also assign you an additional counselor from the 10-12 team for use as an extra resource throughout the post-high school application process, while Ms. Heitson and Mrs. Ford-Deane transition into their new Grade 9 counseling role.

We look forward to working with you in new and exciting ways! More specific detail of the change in counseling assignment for Ms. Heitson and Mrs. Ford-Deane will be communicated early in semester two.

Sincerely,

*Tor Fiske*

Tor Fiske

School Counseling Supervisor

West Hartford Public Schools