



**PALACE**  
T H E A T E R



**APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE  
PUBLIC HEARING**

**March 2, 2015**

**Arts Education Testimony**

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PUBLIC HEARING**

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**TESTIMONY OF**

**THE BUSHNELL  
&  
CONNECTICUT ASSOCIATION FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS  
CAPA - SHUBERT THEATER  
&  
PALACE THEATER  
&  
STAMFORD CENTER FOR THE ARTS**

Good evening members of the Committee. My name is Kelly Wuzzardo and I am Director of Education and Outreach Initiatives for the Connecticut Association for the Performing Arts (CAPA) and the Shubert Theatre in New Haven.

I am here on behalf of the education departments of The Shubert, The Bushnell, The Palace Theater and the Stamford Center For the Arts, all of whom make up the 2015-2016 designated funding identified as the "Performing Arts Centers". Our concern is the proposed 14% decrease in funding for the arts and consolidation of all granted funds to be administered by DECD/Office of the Arts and how that will negatively affect funding of our arts education programs.

Each of our theaters is dedicated to reaching out to the students in our community and enriching their lives through theater and the arts. Whether that interaction happens through a student matinee, an actor workshop in a school, after school programs, a playwright festival, scholarships, summer arts camp, internships, or a multitude of other incredible programs, we collectively serve over 20,000 students every year. As school budgets continue to cut arts education during the school day, many kids depend on these programs for exposure to and participation in the arts. Time and time again, studies have shown that children who have access to arts education excel beyond those who do not. For example, an NEA study in 2012 showed that "...students who have access to the arts in or out of school also tend to have better academic results, better workforce opportunities, and more civic engagement."

I myself have had the privilege to see this happen time and time again in the 12 years I've been with the Shubert. But rather than me telling you one of those stories, I thought it would be better for you to hear it directly from a student who has lived the experience.



“The Bushnell has been involved with students, in my lifetime, for over 15 years, and the things that I see cannot be measured on a spreadsheet or a data wall, but they can be measured in the hearts and minds of the people involved with The Bushnell. The Bushnell has changed students in a way I’ve never seen them change and grow before, in an instant. But more importantly, it has given a new life to teachers. Teachers start thinking about what they do in different ways, they see their students in a completely different way and something happens the day after The Bushnell has come and worked with our students and our teachers. Everyone is rejuvenated, we’re looking at new things, we’re creating new pathways for learning and the whole place is better for it.” – Middle School Literacy Coach

“I have been in the Ensign-Darling Vocal Fellowship Program for two years now and with the program, I’m able to now get the musical skills, the vocal coaching and the voice training and it’s all very helpful because my family is not able to afford those lessons. I now know exactly what I want to do with the rest of my life, but not only that, I now know how it’s attainable.” - 2013, Miles Wilson Toliver, Meriden, CT, now at Carnegie-Mellon University on full scholarship

“This program has helped me rethink my teaching. This program has helped me learn to be more creative in the classroom.” – Elementary School Teacher

“It was wonderful working with you and seeing the joy you brought into the classroom. The Bushnell days are always their fondest memories of their school year.” – Middle School Principal

“Our parents are still talking about the Read Aloud Activity and the Mask Making Workshop. The gift of books to our kindergarten and preschool classrooms, school library and participating parents was an excellent literacy incentive for our learning community.” – Elementary School Principal

“I would like to thank you so much for your continued support of the arts in schools. It is clear that your personal commitment to artistic exposure in young people is unwavering. I would like to thank you for the coordination of artists and programming for “Why We Ride the Bus”. It was phenomenal. During many segments of the show, there was hardly a dry eye after listening to the student’s heartfelt written pieces.” – Middle School Principal

“This partnership is extremely important to our students. I think that was more than evident today. Because of your hard work, and that of the individual artists, you helped to bring out the best in our kids – talents they didn’t necessarily know they possessed. We should really be doing more of this, not less.” – Classroom teacher

“You have made an incredible difference in the lives of so many young writers. From your time and energy, to your generosity and good will. As well, the use (and reputation) of The Bushnell for our events. As coaches and organizers, we struggle each year to make this all happen. OneWord CT Youth Slam applauds you.” – Poetry Coaches

“It was wonderful to see the healing power of theatre – the humor – the scenes and animation of the characters – all took these people out of their troubles for a few magical hours...the [meet and greets with the cast] assured the children that dreams can come true... It was a spirit lifter for a hard economy – made them feel good about their community and the arts that are available.” - Family First Night participant

July 3, 2014

Ms. Yolande Spears  
Vice President of Education and Community Relations  
Ms. Brenda Dranoff-Lopez  
Associate Director of Education  
The Bushnell Center for Performing Arts  
166 Capitol Avenue  
Hartford, CT 06106

Dear Ms. Spears and Ms. Dranoff-Lopez,

I am writing this letter to express my deep gratitude for providing our students with enriching, exceptional, educational opportunities. I personally believe that education in the arts is an integral part of the development of each child. It is well documented that involvement in the arts is associated with gains in mathematics, reading and cognitive skills. The arts should be an essential component to what we want students to learn and it should not be thought of as an "add-on" that comes and goes with budget constraints and changing administrators.

All of the teaching artists you sent to our school presented meaningful, engaging workshops that enhanced our literacy curriculum. The fact the Child's Play Touring Theater performed two of our second graders' creative stories and three of our third graders' poems were interpreted by world renowned musicians all on the stage of the Bushnell Theater made for an experience that students will remember for the rest of their lives. In addition, students thoroughly enjoyed the performances by the tap dancers and the mime, an event that many students who come from economically and socially challenging backgrounds are not often afforded. This opportunity provided a vehicle to connect our students with one of the city's vast cultural resources.

On behalf of the students and staff of West Middle Elementary School please accept my sincere appreciation for your dedication and commitment in ensuring that all children receive a sustainable education in the arts.

Sincerely,

Robin Bornstein  
Curriculum Specialist  
West Middle Elementary School @MLK  
Hartford, CT



"Our success has been based on partnerships by forming relationships whether with our customers or our neighbors. From the very beginning, the Palace Theatre has brought life and energy to the downtown. Together we create a destination."

Mary Schaffer Owner Napa & Co

"In the 28 years that Columbus Park Trattoria has been in business in downtown Stamford, nothing does more for the restaurants than a busy Palace Theatre. Whenever there is an event at the Palace downtown is a hopping, vibrant place to be. It's exciting to see people walking from restaurants to the theater, the streets are packed with folks heading to see a great show."

Michael Marchetti Columbus Park Trattoria

"I didn't know anything about acting but I took a chance and applied for a scholarship. I so glad I did, without that scholarship I would never have found that I love theater."

Neolia A. Triple Threat Performer Intensive student

**The Palace Theatre 61 Atlantic St, Stamford, CT 06901**



Hello,

My name is Terrence Dowdye, and I am currently a junior at the University of New Haven. I attended Cooperative Arts & Humanities High School, right next to the Shubert Theater, and while I was attending the school the Shubert Theater was a huge asset to have right next to building. The theater provided a lot of different theater equipment, and stagehands to help with shows. The Shubert has also benefited me. Capa has employed me for 2 years, as part of the tech crew that works at the Cooperative Arts & Humanities High School. The Shubert has been nothing but an asset to me, because it has provided stable work for me while I am putting myself through college. The Shubert itself, along with all of its employees, has been a huge resource to me, because I am currently majoring in Theater Design. Working for Capa has given me the knowledge, and experience I need to work in professional theater. I have worked on and off of the Shubert stage, and I am so grateful to have such a magnificent space, to have practiced my future career on. I ask you that you please continue to provide funding to CAPA, because I know without a doubt, that they will provide tremendous programs. With such an amazing company behind a great business there is no way that it couldn't be amazing.

Sincerely,

Terrence Dowdye

## Multigenerational Shubert Experiences

A few weeks ago I was having a discussion with my New Haven raised grandmother about her life growing up. Being very nostalgic she talked of the theater experiences she had as a child. She would go see plays at The Palace and other various theaters around New Haven, but when mentioning the Shubert a unique smile ran across her face. She expressed to me that the Shubert Theatre was always a treat, it was one of her favorite places to go. Two generations later I am able to call the Shubert one of my favorite places, but not solely for the lovely building and the exciting shows. The Shubert is one of my favorite places because of the wonderful opportunities I have benefited from.

I recently graduated from Cooperative Arts and Humanities high school and I cannot properly discuss my high school experience without highlighting the education I was given by the Shubert. My junior year is when I started to take advantage of some of the opportunities that the Shubert Summer Theatre gives to Co-Op students. I first worked as a volunteer usher at co-op shows and larger Shubert productions. I went into this excited to watch some free shows but I greatly benefited from the usher program as a whole. I was taught through experience how to work with a group of co-workers and be successful in a work environment while working with the unpredictable attitudes of theater audiences. That summer I took up the technical apprenticeship at the Shubert Summer Theater and Arts Camp. Over the four week period Kelly Wuzzardo taught me the basics of the technical side of theater and then I worked on an actual show produced by the camp. Not only was this my first paying job but I also received fantastic hands on technical experience which allowed me to be hired throughout the year for show rentals at Co-op.



Currently I am working at the Shubert Summer Theater & Arts camp again but this time as a teachers' assistant for two visual arts classes. This is giving me experience with middle school age kids and how to be a friendly authority figure. This is another paying job so I am able to earn more money for college expenses. Through working here I can see that the Shubert gives wonderful art opportunities to the younger generations also. Middle schoolers from all over Connecticut can come to Co-op and be immersed in a fun learning environment of the arts of their choosing. I work in a photography class in the morning. In this class each of the young photographers are given their own basic digital cameras and taught the basic design techniques of taking pictures then they are allowed to apply what they learned in downtown New Haven to create art. Below are some examples of photos my students took during the class along with photos they took of campers in other arts.

I hope that the students I help teach continue to take these opportunities to further their arts education. The experiences that the Shubert Theatre has given me and continues to give the younger generations is unequivocal in a world where arts education is often put to the side. I feel that I am a more educated and well-rounded person because of the Shubert Theatre. My life will forever benefit from what I've learned from the Shubert Theatre.

**David Raccio**



**PALACE**  
**T H E A T E R**

*2004 - 2014*  
*Celebrating 10 years of*  
*Entertaining New Possibilities!*

**Waterbury, CT**

**2014-2015**

Frank Tavera  
CEO  
[tavera@palacetheaterct.org](mailto:tavera@palacetheaterct.org)  
203.346.2007

## **VISION STATEMENT**

The Palace Theater will stimulate a cultural and economic renaissance in the region through the celebration of arts, education and community initiatives. Revered as a treasured jewel this grand performance space will not only inspire lasting memories but will become the preferred venue for performers and patrons alike.

## **MISSION STATEMENT**

To preserve and operate the historic Palace Theater as a performing arts center and a community gathering place that provides a focal point of cultural activity and educational outreach for diverse audiences.

## **THE PALACE THEATER – AS AN ARTS AND EDUCATIONAL CENTER**

Beyond serving as the premier cultural center for the Greater Waterbury Region, serving New Haven, Litchfield, and Fairfield counties, the Palace also provides the highest quality of programs through its comprehensive Arts and Education initiatives.

Not only is it the theater's responsibility to provide programs that are curriculum based and entertaining, it is also its responsibility to ignite in children, a passion for the arts, that encourages creative thought, critical thinking, positive self expression and the desire to continue learning.

Endorsed by the Connecticut Association of Schools, the Palace Theater's Education program does just that. Annually over 10,000 students take part in theater's stage presentations that connect live performance to literature, language arts and relevant social themes. Serving over 24 communities some as far as Bridgeport to our south, Danbury to our west, Winsted to our north and Meriden to our east, the impact the Palace has had on students in Connecticut is far reaching.

## **PARTICIPANTS IN PALACE THEATER EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS**

Bethlehem	Newtown	Bridgeport	Oxford
Bristol	Plantsville	Colebrook	Ridgefield
Danbury	Salem	Derby	Seymour
Hartford	Southbury	Madison	Torrington
Meriden	Waterbury	Middlefield	West Haven
Naugatuck	Winsted	New Haven	Wolcott

A core component of the Palace's education program is the theater's on-stage Education Series, which invites schools to the Palace Theater to reflect on their academic lessons in a majestic venue that encourages thought, laughter and imagination. For many students, a field trip to the Palace is their first experience attending a live theater presentation and an introduction to the performing arts.

Utilizing the Framework Standards, dictated by the State Department of Education, all Palace Theater programs are intricately linked through arts and curriculum connections and address pertinent Developmental Assets, thus validating the educational depth of the program. A few examples of the Palace Educational Programs include:

**Learning in the Wings** - a hands-on educational opportunity, where students 15 years and older can have a unique job shadowing and internship experience alongside Palace Theater Staff in the departments of Technical Direction, Backstage, Front of House Management, Box Office Management and Arts Administration.

**Palatial News** – participating students receive complimentary tickets to a Palace presentation where they act as ‘press.’ Students sit in a press box, receive media badges and when possible, interview performers, crew and audience members. All stories are posted on the Palace Theater website and will be collected and printed in the Palace Theater Journal at the end of the school year. The student’s work is submitted to a local newspaper for potential publication.

**Making Headlines** – an after-school, high school character development program associated with the 2014 production of *NEWSIES*. This program explored the evolution of journalism, its historic importance and its ever changing format in a digital age. Additionally the program explored social and cultural themes of the musical, and provides high school students with a performing and language arts experience that increases theater appreciation while cultivating a youth voice regarding relevant social issues.

Lastly, given the physical and philosophical connection the theater shares with the **Waterbury Arts Magnet School** (WAMS), the Palace works directly with the administration and teaching staff of WAMS to create unique and special opportunities for WAMS middle and high school students. The opportunities include but are not limited to the following:

- Student utilization of the Palace stage as their performance home for their recitals, concerts and theatrical presentations. WAMS students work hand in hand with Palace staff (technical and operational) to create a professional event on the Palace stage.
- Specialized programs, master classes and workshops with touring artists are designed to meet the goals of the WAMS administration, faculty and students as well the Palace staff and the touring productions.

# BEHIND THE HEADLINES

*High school students reflect on their experiences as journalists in the field*

By DIAMOND HARRIS

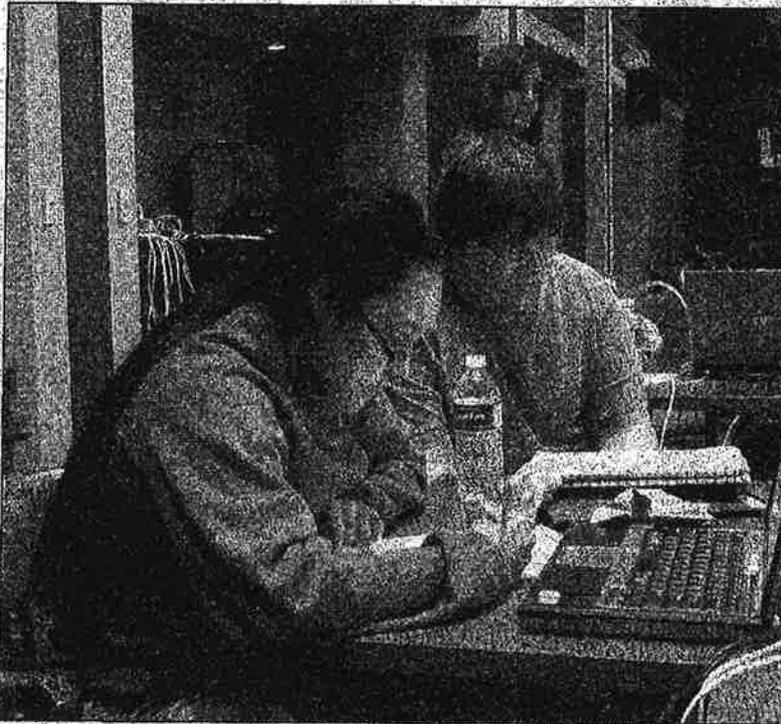
I honestly felt that the journalism program with the Palace was a really great program. I've learned a lot being in this program.

It was a huge experience for me. I was able to hear from guest speakers who are real reporters in Connecticut. They made the program really interesting and I saw how much the reporters and photographers who visited us enjoy their jobs. Being able to share what they do with us young people really made them happy because it's not everyday you get to share with people the arts and techniques of your job.

My best experience in the program was being able to see *Newsies*. They were very wonderful on stage and it was great to see it live. The tour that we had of *The Republican-American* was really amazing. I was so fascinated that the newspaper is housed in what was once a train station.

This journalism program at the Palace should continue for a very long time because it was very beneficial to me and others in the group.

Hopefully next year when I am a senior I will come back to this program and enjoy the many more fascinating journeys with the Palace and their journalism writing program.



Students from area schools work on stories for their "Making Headlines" project as part of the Palace Theater's after-school program.



By JAMES DESSUREAU

Throughout the "Making Headlines" program, my favorite part was the valuable guest speakers. These guests have included *Republican-American* editor David Kreshevsky, photographers Jim Shannon and Erin Covey, and reporters Mike Patrick and Paul Singley. These speakers have provided the group with vast knowledge about the art of journalism and what it takes to be a journalist. "You must embrace the deadlines," said Patrick.

Shannon remarked, "I don't take sides, I take pictures." Kreshevsky commented, "I don't work for the business section. I work for the newspaper." These speakers have taught me some very valuable lessons that will benefit me in the future and for that I am thankful to them.

By ISABELLA PINTO

I really enjoyed this program for several reasons. The first is because it was a great learning experience in regards to the paper. We learned how to interview people and we learned a lot of great tips on how to ask questions and be inquisitive. We learned how to write a newspaper article and how to compose a good article that really capture the attention of your "audience."

The second reason I enjoyed this program was because we were able to go to the show *Newsies* and

see the show from the perspective of a reporter and entertainment reviewer. We were also able to interview the national touring cast, which was really exciting. It was great to see the cast as normal people like us talking about their experiences.

I also really enjoyed the tour of *The Republican-American* and I thought that it was extremely informative. I also really enjoyed the guest speakers, who were great at representing their departments of the newspaper. I thought that the speakers really showed us the true diversity of the paper.

# A "Sweeping" Success Story

## WAMS Graduate and Former Palace Intern Shares Behind-the-Scenes Experience

By Claire Gaudette, Former Palace Theater Intern

"Never be afraid to pick up a broom." This simple sentence is the most powerful piece of advice I have been given during my three years of stage management experience. I received it as a freshman from Anthony Patia, who occasionally works backstage at the Palace Theater, shortly before I began interning there as part of the theater's "Learning in the Wings" job shadowing program. Now, as a Waterbury Arts Magnet School (WAMS) graduate, I realize the value of this advice more than ever and appreciate the fact that I have had many learning opportunities that the average public school student does not.

One of the most unique things about WAMS is its relationship with the Palace Theater. From my sophomore to senior year, I had the incredible opportunity to intern at the Palace as a participant in their "Learning in the Wings" program. Through my involvement, I have witnessed, participated in, and learned about the technical process and backstage efforts that go into presenting a theatrical production on a professional stage. Starting in tenth grade, I interned during the national touring Broadway production of *In the Heights*, as well as Shen Yun, an internationally-acclaimed Chinese dance production. Right from the start, the palatines of these productions gave me a broad perspective of the different types of tours that crews work on throughout their careers. I had to have more, so I kept coming back.

*"I have witnessed, participated in, and learned about the technical process and backstage efforts that go into presenting a theatrical production on a professional stage."*

My favorite department to work in during my time at the Palace was props. I enjoy the organization of prop tracking, but also the whimsicality of some of the items used in each production. During the theater's presentations of *Elf: The Musical* and *The Grinch Who Stole Christmas*, I interned for the props department and had so much fun working with all of the wacky Christmas-themed items. Since *The Grinch* "leech" its national tour in Waterbury, I was also able to learn about the process of making props from the touring technicians. I worked with Richie Monaco and Catherine Moore in creating "Who" accessories and fixing the paint on various Christmas decorations used in the show. I also learned how to wire a stage pin and twist plugs on my own, which is something I have found to be very practical ever since, both on and offstage.

All of the opportunities I have had as a Palace intern not only taught me about various theatrical departments and practices, but have helped me build a strong relationship with the backstage crew. After three years, I have worked in every stage department in some capacity or another while under the supervision of professionally-trained house technicians. As a current stage management student at Point Park University in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, I believe that my experience with theatrical professionals at the Palace has given me a leg up in the college world. Not only am I familiar with the practices of professionals, but I now have the hands-on experience that goes along with it.

Truly, theatre is about not being afraid of picking up that broom. It is about trying everything, jumping into new experiences, and making good use of yourself and your time no matter how menial a task may seem. Everyone is working towards the same result, and thus, everything is important...even sweeping.



*"Learning in the Wings" intern Claire Gaudette shares a peek backstage at the Palace Theater.*



*Gaudette (center) poses with members of the Palace's backstage crew during the 2013 Connecticut High School Musical Theatre Awards. Claire was honored with a "Student Achievement Award" for her work on the set of WAMS' *Into The Woods* production.*

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FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT  
FOR HEALTHY LIVING  
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

January 28, 2014

Dear Connecticut Community Foundation:

The Greater Waterbury YMCA is happy to write this letter in support of the expansion and continuation of the "Our Cultural Heritage" dance program, which will be presented in partnership with the Palace Theater, CT Dance Theatre and our YMCA youth.

Last year's collaboration provided 60 children from the YMCA After-School Program with the opportunity to learn about dance as an art form, as well as a beneficial form of exercise. They were most appreciative to be included in these workshops, which provided them with an interactive arts experience that they otherwise might never have experienced. It was clear that our After-school children greatly benefited from this program, and we hope to continue this successful collaboration in 2014.

The Greater Waterbury YMCA is committed to working collaboratively with the City of Waterbury and its numerous community partners to improve the quality of life for its residents. We hope the collaboration with the Palace and CT Dance Theater will continue and that our YMCA constituents can benefit from the experience.

Sincerely,

Jim O'Rourke  
Executive Director



# Waterbury Arts Magnet School

16 South Elm Street ♦ Waterbury, Connecticut 06706 ♦ (203) 573-6300 ♦ Fax (203) 573-6325

**Arts ♦ Academics ♦ Achievement**

Elizabeth S. McGrath  
Principal

Frank A. Purcaro  
High School Asst Principal

Rosalyn D. Glass  
Middle School Asst Principal

Dana Manning  
Supervisor of Arts & PD

April 26, 2013

To whom it may concern,

My name is Dana Manning, Supervisor of Fine Arts and Professional Development at Waterbury Arts Magnet School. We have been collaborating with the Palace Theater for many years. Many of our students have participated in the "I Give My Word" after-school programs at the Palace Theater. We have also had teachers working in and supporting the program. Our students have all had very positive responses to the program, which is tied directly to our arts and language arts/English curricula.

I have found the Palace's program facilitators, supervisors and teachers to be well organized and responsive to educational trends. They run a great program.

We use The Palace Theater and their programming in our recruitment efforts. Not only do our students enjoy performing on the stage, but they have the opportunity to participate in numerous after school educational programs they offer, including next season's "I Give My Word: Perspectives and Perceptions" program.

I would like to see this opportunity continue for our students.

Best,

*Dana Manning*

Dana Manning  
Supervisor of Fine Arts  
And Professional Development

# NAUGATUCK HIGH SCHOOL

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Ph: (203) 720-5400 Fax: (203) 720-5444

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Principal

**Eileen Mezzo**  
Associate Principal

**John DellaCamera**  
Dean of Student Life

**Thomas Pompei**  
Dean of Student Life  
Director of Athletics

24 April 2014

To Whom It May Concern:

For three years I have been recruiting and bringing students to the Palace Theater for their "I Give My Word" program, held after school. They come twice a week to wait for a bus that will take them to Waterbury, and spend their time, both in the program and outside of it, creating works of art – both written, visual and musical – to shed light on a social issue or cause that is important to them. They give up time with their friends and other school activities to participate. I give up time to work with colleagues on lessons and family activities with my own children.

And I wouldn't have it any other way.

I have been honored to bring students to this program and to be a part of its creation. I have committed to developing the curriculum, recruiting students and faculty, assisting in the program direction and student supervision. I am even proud to assist students in coordinating their projects.

Naugatuck High School will participate in the 2014 "Making Headlines: The Art of Journalism" program, and I am committed to assisting in the curriculum development.

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to reach me at (203) 720.5656.

Sincerely,

Caroline Messenger  
English Department  
Journalism and Yearbook adviser