



DR. DIANNA R. WENTZELL, COMMISSIONER

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## **Secretary of the State Merrill and Commissioner Wentzell Launch Red, White, and Blue Schools Civic Engagement Initiative**

(SOUTH WINDSOR, CT)—Secretary of the State Denise Merrill and Education Commissioner Dianna R. Wentzell visited Timothy Edwards Middle School in South Windsor on Tuesday to announce the launch of the Red, White, and Blue Schools Initiative.

The Red, White, and Blue Schools Initiative is a partnership between the State Department of Education and the Office of the Secretary of the State that will reward schools that develop programs that foster strong civic engagement among students. The program is available to all K-12 schools in Connecticut and will launch in the fall of the 2016-17 school year.

Each year, a theme will be announced and schools are encouraged to teach the theme through interdisciplinary activities, whole-school events, extracurricular clubs/activities, student-centered learning and community outreach. The theme for the first year will be “The Electoral Process.”

“It is critical that we equip young people with the knowledge and perspective it will take to be informed, active citizens in a global society,” Commissioner Wentzell said. “The Red, White, and Blue Schools Initiative encourages schools to think outside the box about ways to engage students more actively in community and government. I want to thank Secretary of the State Merrill for her partnership on this innovative program and I look forward to the exciting work ahead.”

“A presidential election gives us so many opportunities to learn about democracy. Students can learn how voters are registered and polling locations are set up as well as how the votes are counted. What better time to learn about our democracy than an election year?” Secretary of the State Merrill said.

Schools that want to participate in the program will have to meet certain criteria to be considered a Red, White, and Blue School. Requirements include integrating lessons about civic engagement into social studies classes and at least two other subjects and holding a whole-school event focused on student engagement, such as a mock election or a student-led candidate forum. Participating schools will be encouraged to take innovative approaches to teaching civics in the classroom and to consider involving extracurricular activities that promote civic and community engagement.

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