

“My overall impression is that this was a year of transition,” said Schools Superintendent Dr. Michael Cicchetti. “Certainly there was a transition to a new superintendent.”

Though Dr. Cicchetti announced his retirement in November after only 10 months on the job, he said much was accomplished and achieved over the past year, and there’s still more he hopes to do before he retires in June.

He said this year in the Easton, Redding and Region 9 districts, there has been a focus on continuous academic improvement and “making a great school system better” — the topic of his writing prompt for the superintendent search.

Dr. Cicchetti also cited the strategic planning process that began this year as a milestone for the districts. Though the work was suspended after Dr. Cicchetti announced his retirement, he said those who took part in the process were able to write a new mission statement and draft strategies for the plan, which also helped to promote continuous improvement, he said.

This fall, the districts launched an official Continuous Improvement Plan that incorporates collaborative goal-setting among staff at Samuel Staples Elementary School and Helen Keller Middle School in Easton and Joel Barlow High School in Redding, which is shared by Easton and Redding students.

“The primary feature is that it requires teachers to work in collaborative teams,” Dr. Cicchetti said. “The second is that it allows teachers to work on identifying a common focus within a schoolwide goal that is measurable.”

Dr. Cicchetti also brought up the bullying project going on at the Easton and Redding middle schools, and at Joel Barlow. The researchers involved in the project worked on collecting information about bullying at the schools. They are now working on an intervention program to help students “know appropriate ways to intervene when they witness bullying in school, especially when there are no adults around,” Dr. Cicchetti said.

## **SCHOOLS 2010 REVIEW; Cicchetti: This was a year of transition**

Written by Liz Skalka

Sunday, 02 January 2011 10:55

---

In other Easton schools news, Peggy Sullivan, director of finance and operations, noted that all three school districts' budgets passed the first time around this year.

Also this year, former Easton Board of Education Chair Al Treidel stepped down after announcing he was moving from town. Dr. Dan Underberger was elected to be the new chair.

The Region 9 Board of Education serving Joel Barlow High School saw Dr. William Baker resign and Tony Neidenbach move. Dr. Judith Shapiro and Margot Abrams were appointed in their places.

### Individual schools

Helen Keller Middle School experienced a great loss this year when its principal, Joan Parker, passed away in November. Ms. Parker had been principal since 2004.

"The reaction and outpouring from the community reflected how much of a loss it was for the entire Easton community," Dr. Cicchetti said.

The Project Lead the Way pre-engineering classroom opened this year at Helen Keller, which was the work of Ms. Parker, the Easton Learning Foundation and parents and staff at Helen Keller.

Helen Keller was also nominated to become a Blue Ribbon School by the U.S. Department of Education for students' performance on the Connecticut Mastery Test. It was one of only four schools in the state to receive a nomination.

Also at Helen Keller, E. Marie Mas, assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction, said sixth graders received new science textbooks.

## **SCHOOLS 2010 REVIEW; Cicchetti: This was a year of transition**

Written by Liz Skalka

Sunday, 02 January 2011 10:55

---

Samuel Staples marked its year with patches of pumpkins growing at the school and a proposal for an outdoor classroom to enhance learning.

Both schools saw DARE officer Mark Pastor celebrate 20 years with the program, providing drug and alcohol education to the community. "He got to know entire families," Dr. Cicchetti said.

At Joel Barlow High School, students began using iPads to enhance their learning in science. "Tom McMorrان [Barlow's head of school] truly has a vision of the high school for the future," Dr. Cicchetti said.

Ms. Sullivan noted that drainage and ground improvements at Field A were completed, allowing students to spend more time practicing on the field. The lower gym's bleachers were also replaced.

In addition, all three public schools serving Easton won CAFE 2010 excellence awards for educational communications.

Dr. Cicchetti said overall this year, "What I observed was a great collaboration and respectful interactions between town agencies and different boards. There was also some good discussion that held the administration accountable for what we were requesting and outstanding community involvement and support, including from the Easton Learning Foundation and Redding Education Foundation."