



10 Most Frequently-Asked Questions About the '08-'09 Education Budget

1. Which BUDGET meetings should I attend?

Over the next month, these meetings are planned. Try to attend all of them, but *Monday, April 14th* and *Tuesday, April 15th* are key events:

- 6:30 p.m. **Tuesday, April 1, 2008** – Board of Education presents its budget to the Board of Finance @ Canton Community Center
- ✦ 7:00 p.m. **Monday, April 14, 2008**** – **Board of Finance Public Budget Hearing** @ Canton Community Center
- ✦ 4:00 p.m. **Tuesday, April 15, 2008**** – **Board of Finance Workshop** sets Town budget @ Canton Community Center
- 7:30 p.m. **Monday, May 12, 2008** – Annual Budget Meeting @ Canton High School

2. Should I speak at a meeting? What should I say?

At some meetings, the public may speak; at others, the public may only observe. However, even when you do not speak, your presence at the meeting becomes an observable “presence” in the budget process. The **Board of Finance Public Budget Hearing** is set for **Monday, April 14th**. Many town residents will choose to speak to the Board of Finance at this meeting about both the Board of Education’s budget and the Board of Selectman’s budget.

If you do choose to speak, try to be as specific as possible. It is required that you begin with your name and address. According to one member of the Board of Finance, general statements, such as “I support the budget,” are not as well received by the BOF as very specific statements which show you truly understand what is in the budget and its implications for education in Canton.

The next night, **Tuesday, April 15th**, at the **Board of Finance’s Budget Workshop**, residents may only *observe* the discussion. Your presence in the audience does speak for you, however. The Board of

Finance's decision to cut or accept the Education and Selectman's budgets follows their discussion.

Remember: if you can't attend a meeting, you may write a letter to the Board of Finance and request that it be read aloud. You may also call your Board of Finance representatives or write email messages with your opinions.

3. How much is the budget increase?



The Adopted Education Budget of \$22,021,023, including salaries, benefits, buses, utilities, supplies, equipment, etc., proposes a +6.49% increase over last year's spending. Contracted salaries account for about 70% of the increases; operational expenses make up the remaining 30%. The budget includes only two new positions: a .5 kindergarten teacher and 1.0 Special Education paraprofessional. These

increases are off-set by personnel decreases elsewhere, resulting in increased class sizes in 4th grade and in many courses at the high school. This budget includes a +17.7% increase in fuel and utilities, a +8.6% increase in employee benefits, and a *decrease* of -52.5% in equipment.

The Capital Improvement Budget, which in Canton is part of the education budget, is \$189,620, a *decrease* of -26.65%. It includes phone service equipment for CBPS, a partial bleacher replacement at the high school, renovations of the bathrooms in the old section of the high school, repairs to the maintenance facility, replacement of musical instruments, and a good used truck to replace an aging vehicle. While the Operational Budget supports daily instruction, the Capital Improvement Budget maintains the district's long-term investment in its buildings and equipment and provides for efficiencies.

Most of the towns whose budget numbers follow *exclude* Capital Improvement from their budgets, since capital improvement projects are "non-recurring." An example is Granby which *excludes* Capital Improvement from the school budget, because the town regularly funds a steady \$400,000 - \$500,000 for these projects. If that were the case in Canton, the Education budget increase would be 5.57% vs. 6.49%.

[\(To read more about the Operating and Capital Improvement Budgets... click here! You will be able to click to return to this spot.\)](#)

4. How does our increase compare to other districts?

Our budget is in line with both the local districts and the districts which share our demographics (DRG). Canton's 6.49% increase, which *includes* capital improvement (CIP), is lower than Avon's 9.88%, Tolland's 8.95%, Suffield's 7.9%, Bolton's 6.99%, and Ellington's 6.90%, all of which *exclude* capital improvement. It is higher, however, than East Granby's 6.0%, Somers 5.16%, Farmington's 4.59%, Granby's 4.48%, and Simsbury's 4.21%, all of which exclude their capital improvement dollars as well. The only district which also includes capital improvement is Region 10, and its proposal is 4.45%, although the dollar amount increase is higher than Canton's by about \$70,000.



It's important to remember the larger the district is, and the higher its budget, the better able is that district to absorb large dollar amounts with lower percentages. Two excellent examples are:

1. Simsbury, which has a dollar increase almost twice Canton's at a \$2,446,247 over last year, but has a 2% lower increase than Canton's; and
2. Farmington, which has a budget increase almost \$900,000 higher than Canton's with a 2% lower budget increase.

[\(To read more about how Canton's spending compares to other District's ... click here! You will be able to click to return to this spot.\)](#)

5. What was cut from the budget before it was presented to the Board of Education and the residents? Why?

This is a bare bones budget. Next year, class sizes will increase in many areas; and no new initiatives or new technology were budgeted. The initial budget which included our plans for additional staff and programs resulted in a +14% increase, much more than the town residents could afford. Despite the fact that the cuts were painful, reductions were made in this initial budget to arrive at +6.49%. In the first round, we cut requests for a Technology Integration Specialist at the High School and Middle School. We cut additional days for the middle school psychologist, a part-time World Language teacher to introduce Spanish at the Intermediate School, an additional Grade 6 teacher, an increase in art and Family and Consumer Science at the High School, and so on. Every attempt was made to

recognize the very real fiscal constraints of the town and to budget responsibly, and the increase still stood around 9%.

In a second round of deliberations, additional cuts were made. At Canton Intermediate School, a retiring teacher will not be replaced, resulting in one fewer section in 4th grade. The class sizes at CIS will average 24 in Grade 4, 21 in Grade 5, and 24 in Grade 6. At Canton High School some academic and honors sections were combined or sections were eliminated. This increased to 17 the number of high school classes with 25 - 30 students. However, *all* of the district's class sizes fall within the Board of Education policy. [\(To read more about Canton's class size projections...click here! You will be able to click to return to this spot.\)](#)

Ultimately, the Education budget cut .3 of the salary for the Director of Facilities. This .3 had previously been part of the Selectman's budget; and when the town cut its support, the Board of Education initially planned to absorb the difference.

There are no new technology initiatives slated for next year. We cut plans to add interactive white boards and LCD's, a video-streaming project, and AlphaSmarts®. This budget does continue to replace aging computer equipment in line with our replacement policy and continues our lease agreement for the existing PC computers. It also maintains legal licensing for our existing curriculum software, Microsoft, email, student information systems, and virus protection and supports our infrastructure (servers, switches, etc.).

In addition, this budget maintains the district's contractual obligations to its staff, its requirements to fund services to students in need of academic support, and its commitment to quality professional development. This budget will allow us to remain in compliance with the specifics of the *No Child Left Behind* Act.

[\(To read more about the Superintendent's Initial Cuts... click here! You will be able to click to return to this spot.\)](#)



6. How were the decisions made?

Decisions were made carefully and based on the overall needs of all students, but the rationale behind those decisions is often not transparent. For example, some residents question why we would support an additional section of kindergarten and not an additional section of 4th grade? Our recent data has taught us to put time and financial support behind our earliest

readers, recognizing that if six-year-olds have a solid foundation we will spend less time and money in remediation and all students will ultimately benefit. Kindergarten teachers follow a much more demanding curriculum than ever before, and they are trying to accomplish in a half day the same academic standards other districts' kindergarten teachers accomplish in a full day. [\(To read more about our pyramid of support....click here! You will be able to return to this spot.\)](#)

Similarly, some class sizes have increased at the high school, so that students can continue to select from a full range of programming. Some class sizes remain small, such as several of the AP courses, Calculus, or Child Development; but maintaining these courses is necessary to support students' future aspirations. It is important to remember that if programs are eliminated at the high school, the students who enrolled in those courses must re-enroll in another course, so the amount of FTE remains about the same.

At the high school, World Language courses for academic and honors level students were combined because of the low number of students enrolled. For example, the 8 students who wanted Academic French II were combined with the 15 students who wanted Honors French II for a total class size of 23. The 9 students who wanted Academic French III were combined with the 12 students who wanted Honors for a total class size of 21. Similarly, Spanish VI students were combined for a total of 23. If these six classes had not been combined, they would have average class sizes of 11 students. On the other hand, only 11 students enrolled in AP Calculus AB, which *cannot* be combined with another course.

Thus, it is fair to say that the 6.49% budget increase was achieved only by carefully balancing the impact of one decision against another.

7. If additional cuts are needed, what will be considered?

Canton will make any additional cuts mindful of its obligations to Special Education, the requirements of *No Child Left Behind*, and other factors, such as the Canton High School's upcoming accreditation with NEASC.

Therefore, the first items looked at will be programs which are neither mandated nor bound by day-to-day programming requirements. A school district must provide daily tutoring for students in need, but is not required to provide those same services in the summer, so there may be a need to eliminate programs such as the summer school at Cherry Brook Primary and Canton Intermediate. We can also look to cut other items which are not



required, but would have benefited us in the long-term, such as the \$5 a day increase in substitute teacher's pay, (which would have put us more in line with competing local districts), or the purchase of a good used district truck (which would cost less to maintain than our present 1989 Mitsubishi).

In brief, the answer to this question depends on the size of the cut. A substantial budget cut will mean cuts in both personnel and programs, because after acknowledging the "fixed expenses" (such as salaries, insurance, utilities, and transportation) which *can't* be cut, trying

to find a large cut in the remainder of the Operating Budget is extremely difficult. The total "unfixed portion" of the High School budget, for example, is \$336,934 (a *decrease* of \$8,000 less than last year's budget). It includes textbooks, equipment, supplies, extra-curricular activities, athletics, music, professional development, dues & fees, postage, graduation expenses, police services, and so on. The other unfixed portions are: Canton Middle School -- \$92,442, Canton Intermediate -- \$153,979, and Cherry Brook Primary -- \$182,727.

As you can see, it becomes difficult to cut the budget *without* looking at the large ticket items within it – i.e. salaries and programs. Every 1% cut in the budget means a decrease of \$206,789. Therefore, small cuts in line items are not enough to accomplish this reduction. For example, cutting \$3,000 from each school's textbook account would put us only 6% of the way to \$206,789.

8. How much are we spending on technology?

The Technology budget is down \$75,784. The proposed technology budget is a maintenance budget and supports no new equipment or programs. It includes: the replacement of aging computers in accordance with the district's replacement policy, the Microsoft licensing fees for the district's computers; the



software programs we use for email, to manage student records and attendance, and to generate report cards; the maintenance of our servers; and our infrastructure needs. At this point, it does still include *the AlertNow Early Notification System*, which has the *primary* purpose of providing information to parents in a true emergency and the *secondary* purpose of ready communications with students' homes. A major district initiative to change instructional methodology through the installation of interactive white boards and ceiling-mounted LCD's has been put on hold.

9. What is the district doing to save money?

The District is trying to save money in both large-ticket, fixed expenses and its day-to-day operational expenses. This year storage tanks were installed that should save on the heating of hot water at the High School and Middle School. The budget includes a piece of software which automatically shuts down computers and is expected to pay for itself within one year.

The Board of Education and Education Association of Canton negotiated a contract which will realize savings in employee health insurance and prescription drugs plans. The increase in benefits is \$85,000 lower than it would have been without this cost savings. Adding parking fees at Canton High School and a program use fee for CPAT brings in approximately \$35,000 - \$50,000 additional dollars. The parking fees are used to improve the grounds at the High School and Middle School, and the CPAT fee off-sets that program's expenses.

Winning a "Computer-Assisted Writing Grant" for \$64,800 paid for two classroom carts with 24 laptops each and enabled the High School to set-up four classrooms with interactive whiteboards and LCD's. Another grant for \$2000 created an additional interactive classroom.

Yearly, our PTOs support the district with contributions for new technology initiatives, classroom equipment, and programs. Community members have donated program enhancements as diverse as landscaping, weight lifting equipment, musical instruments, and a high-end commercial blueprint printer for our CADD lab. On the "pennies" scale, teachers are



purchasing “excellent used” texts from Amazon.com and Budget Text, often saving as much as \$20.00 – \$30.00 per book.

10. If I have additional questions, where can I get answers?

The website has updated budget information, including the latest version of the “Brick-by-Brick” school district spending analysis. But, you should also feel free to email the Superintendent, Kevin Case, at kcase@cantonschools.org or any of the Board of Education members. Their contact information is readily available on the webpage, in the left menu, under “Board Members.”

To read even more about Canton’s expenditures compared to others in our DRG click on last year’s in-depth study: [***The Brick-by-Brick Report: Examining and Understanding the Cost of Education in Canton Public Schools***](#)”

Additional Information:

3. How much is the increase?

Canton Public Schools Proposed Board of Education Budget Increases

Salaries Contractual increases for present staff	\$685,432 +
New Personnel .5 FTE Kindergarten Teacher 1.0 Special Education Paraprofessional	Up \$28,213 + Up \$15,233 +
Utilities Water, electricity, propane, refuse, heat energy, oil	Up \$124,260 +
Employee Benefits	Up \$257,316 +
Operational Expenses Teaching supplies, textbooks, transportation, maintenance	Up \$259,305 +
Out-of-District Tuition	Up \$157,018 +
Equipment	Down \$214,401 -
Transportation K – 12 and Out-of-District	Up \$98,390 +
Capital Improvement	Down \$68,900 -
TOTAL OPERATING BUDGET INCREASE 6.49%	\$ 1,342,116

This Budget Proposal includes:

Canton High School

- .28 increase in Science, due to increased enrollments and maintaining laboratory class sizes around 20 – 21 **
- .1 increase in Social Studies to support enrollment in electives **
- .2 increase in World Language **
- Curriculum Development work in preparation for NEASC
- Purchase of new textbooks for Latin III and International Studies

- Field hockey goals and a wrestling mat
- 14 TI-84 calculators, lab probes, sensors, and a view screen kit

** Note: Increases in FTE are off-set by decreases in other areas: Art, English, and Math

Canton Middle School

- PugMill clay recycler and slab roller for art
- 2 sewing machines for the Family and Consumer Science experiential
- Grade 8 Spanish textbooks
- Continued professional development in “Writing Across the Content Areas”

Canton Intermediate School

- After-School CMT Academy
- Continued Professional Development for teachers in Reader’s/Writer’s Workshop
- Purchase of books for classroom libraries

Cherry Brook Primary School

- .5 Kindergarten Teacher due to increased enrollment
- Purchase of leveled books for classroom libraries
- Continued Professional Development for teachers in Reader’s/Writer’s Workshop

Technology

- Continuation of the PC Migration plan; replacement of five- and six-year-old Macintosh computers with PC’s

Capital Improvement Expenditures

- Phone system hardware replacement at CBPS
- Partial Bleacher replacement at CHS
- District musical instruments
- Repair to maintenance building
- Used truck replacement for the district’s 1989 Mitsubishi

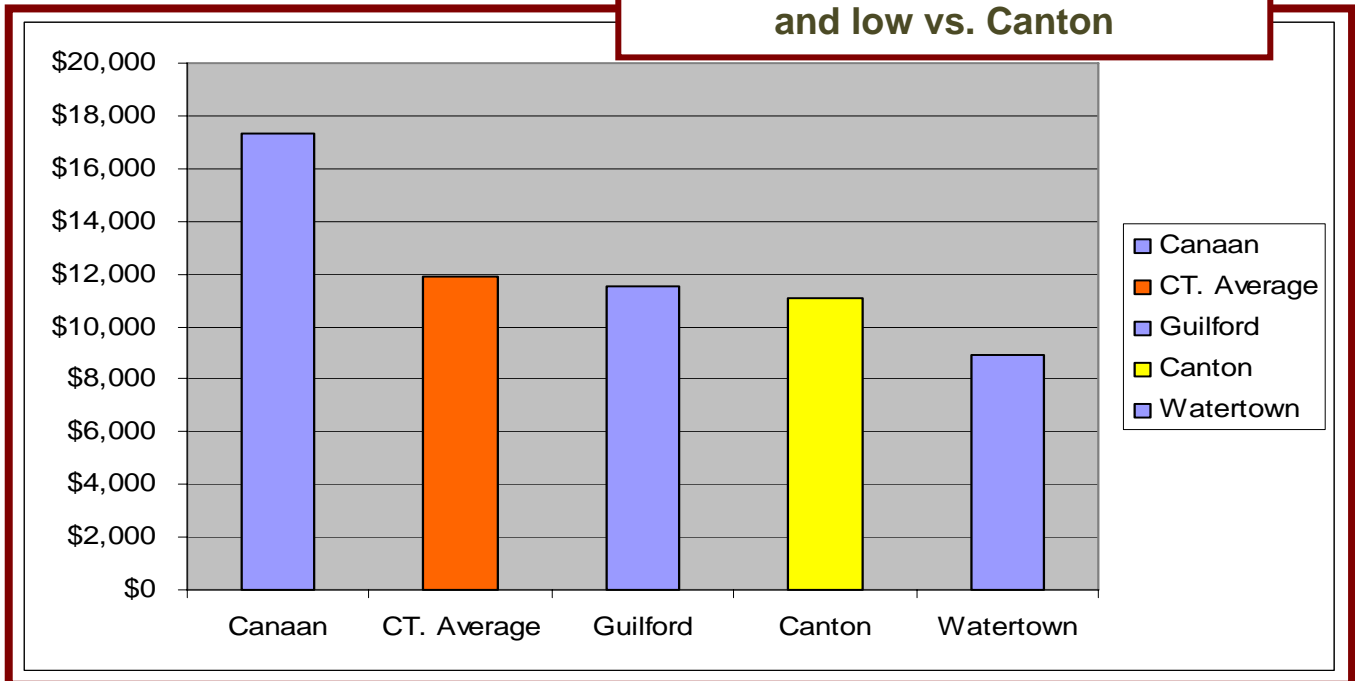
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4. How does our budget increase compare to other local districts?

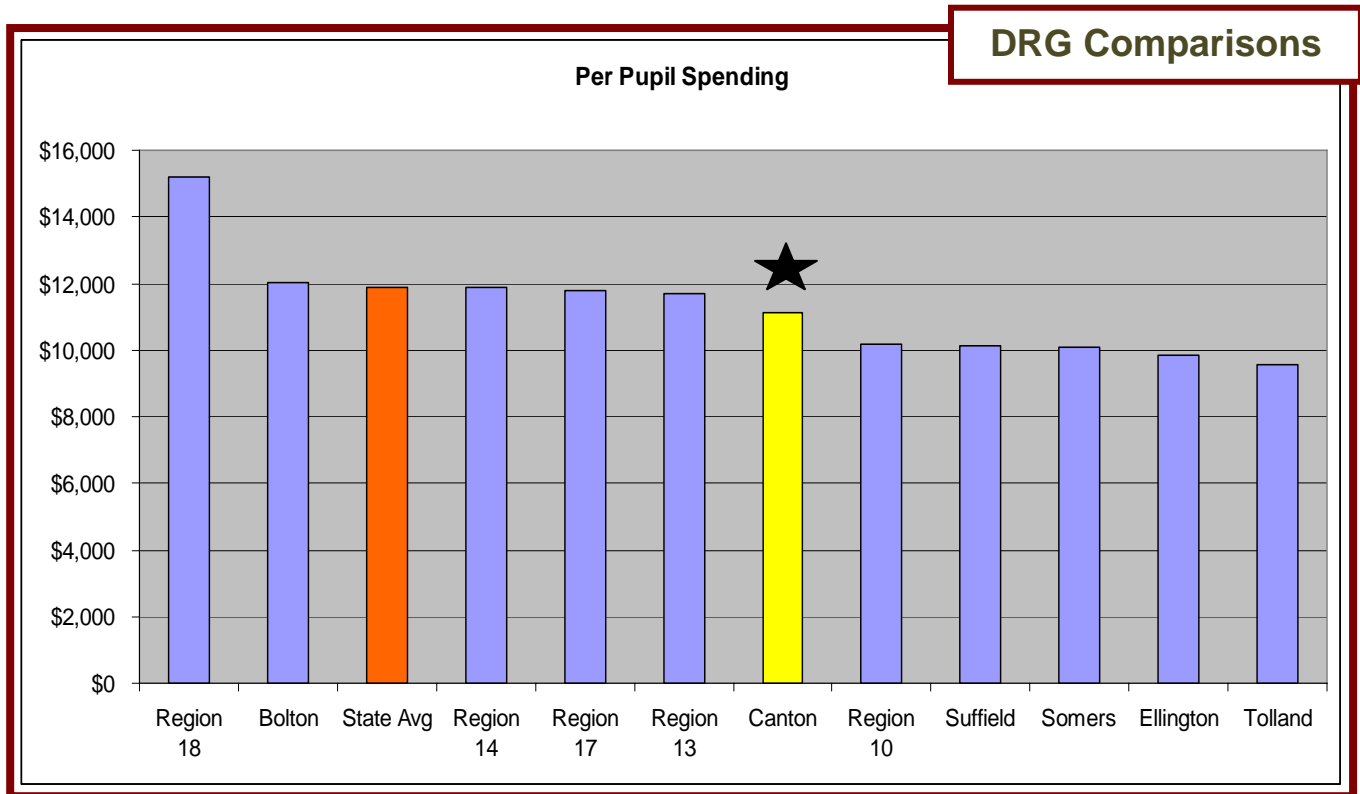
The following chart shows the budget increases (the most recent figures we have been able to obtain, but not yet town approved budgets) for the local districts, as well as the districts in our DRG, (Demographic Reference Group). Remember that the larger the district is, and the higher its budget, the better able is that district to absorb large dollar amounts with lower percentages. An excellent example is Simsbury which is requesting \$1,100,000 dollars more than Canton, but has a budget percentage increase 2.3% lower than Canton's.

District	Proposed Budget	\$\$ Increase	% Increase	Capital Improvement
Avon	44,537,875	4,006,484	9.88%	excluded
Tolland	34,417,895	2,827,049	8.95%	excluded
Suffield	29,770,229	2,179,649	7.90%	excluded
Bolton	12,051,463	787,542	6.99%	excluded
Ellington	28,560,931	1,834,435	6.90%	excluded
Canton	22,021,023	1,342,116	6.49%	included
East Granby	12,737,550	721,550	6.00%	excluded
Somers	18,880,734	926,349	5.16%	excluded
Farmington	50,474,606	2,213,174	4.59%	excluded
Granby	26,250,004	1,124,480	4.48%	excluded
Region 10	33,161,428	1,411,759	4.45%	included
Simsbury	60,527,952	2,446,247	4.21%	excluded

Per pupil spending comparisons:
high, state average, median,
and low vs. Canton

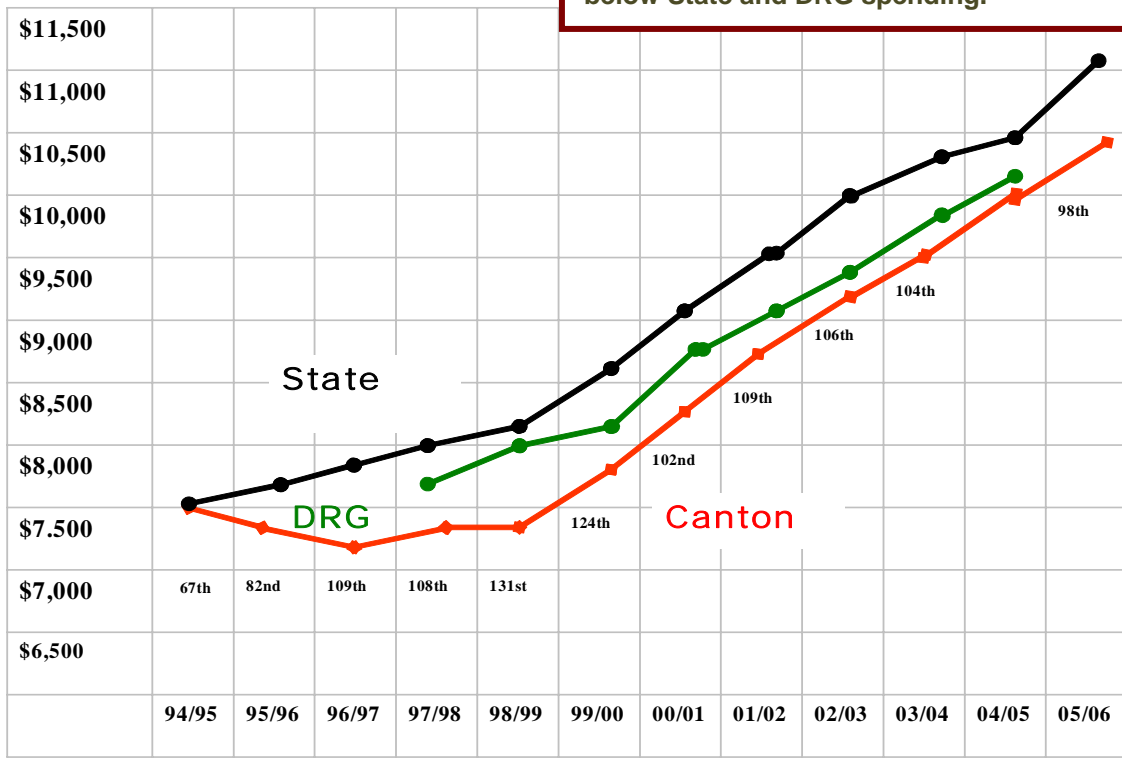


Based on the 2006-2007 per pupil costs from the 166 school districts that reported to the State Department of Education, Canton ranks 100th in per pupil costs with \$11,115. This is \$764 below the average expenditure of \$11,879 for all Connecticut districts. The previous year Canton ranked 98th out of 166 districts and was only \$724 below the State average, last year dropping an additional \$40 per pupil below the average.



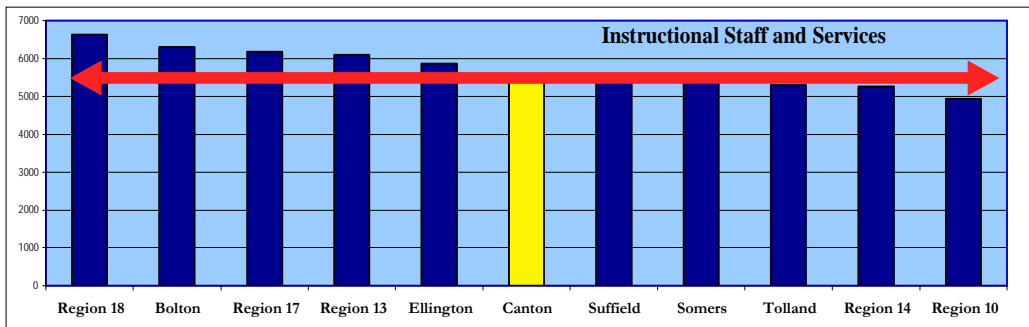
Despite the fact that Canton ranks 100th out of 166 school districts in per pupil spending and falls in the middle to low end of spending in the DRG (Demographic Reference Group), our students achieve among the highest test scores in the state. Over 90% of Canton's students score in the top three bands (out of five) on each test, and the results were excellent within our area and the DRG. For example, in Grade 4 Writing, 80% of students scored in the top two bands, with 43% scoring Advanced. In Grade 6 Math, 87% of the students scored in the top two bands with 51% percent of students scoring Advanced. In Grade 8, we saw similar results; (90% in the top two bands in Math with 47% scoring Advanced; 85% in the top two bands in Reading with 40% scoring Advanced; and 84% in the top two bands in Writing with 41% scoring Advanced. See "Archived District News" in the left menu for complete testing reports.

When per pupil spending is tracked over the past 14 years, Canton has a long term trend of staying below State and DRG spending.



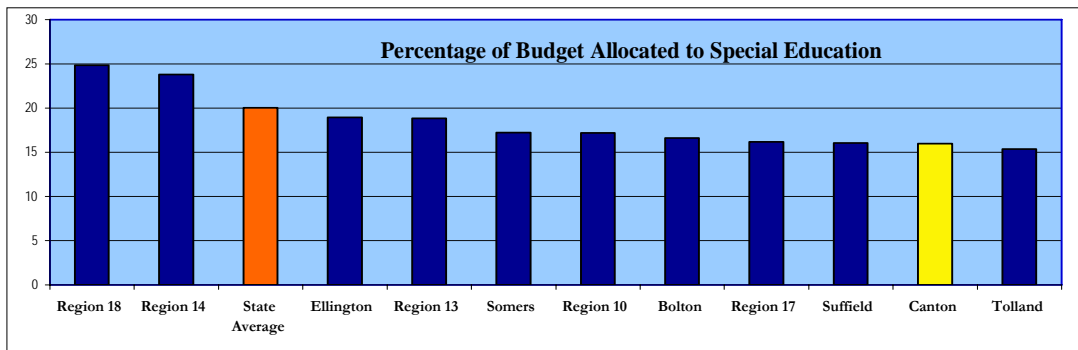
Instructional Staff & Services

- Teachers' salaries, benefits, and other related costs
- 57% of our budget; 58% is State average .
- Canton ranks 6th in the DRG in this category, spending \$5,561 of the total per-pupil costs.
- Expenses are closer to those of Region 10 (\$4,943 -- the lowest level of spending) than they are to Region 18 (\$6,630 -- the highest level of spending).



Special Education Costs

- 15.96% of Canton's budget
- State average = 20.03%
- DRG C average = 20.09%.



You can read even more about Canton's expenditures compared to others in our DRG, by clicking on ["The Brick-by-Brick Report: Examining and Understanding the Cost of Education in Canton Public Schools"](#) on the District's homepage.

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5. What was cut from the budget before it was presented to the Board of Education and the residents? Why?

Class Size 2008 – 2009 Projections

	# of Students	# of Sections		Class Size	FTE Increase/Decrease
		Current	Projected		
Grade PK	25	1	1	25	---
Grade K	143	7	8	18	+ .5 FTE
Grade 1	139	6	7	20	+ 1 FTE
Grade 2	132	6	6	22	---
Grade 3	131	7	6	22	- 1 FTE
Grade 4	143	6	6	24	- 1 FTE

Grade 5	123	6	6	21	---
Grade 6	141	7	6	24	---
	# of Students	# of Sections		Class Size	FTE Increase/Decrease
		Current	Projected		
HS English	606	29	27	23	-.4 FTE
<p>The budget maintains class sizes of 19 – 20 in 9th and 10th grade classes. The courses with the highest enrollments are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> AP English Language and Composition 27 Journalism 30 Heroes and Monsters Academic 24 Heroes and Monsters Honors 30 Senior Project Academic 26 Senior Project Honors 27 					
HS World Language	352	18	19	19	+.2 FTE
<p>The budget requires the combining of academic and honors sections in both Spanish and French. The courses with the highest enrollments are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> French II Academic and Honors 23 French III Academic and Honors 21 French IV Academic and Honors 27 French V and AP 10 Spanish IV Academic and Honors 23 Spanish V and AP 10 					
Social Studies	597	24	24.5	24	+.1 FTE
<p>The budget includes a new course offering in International Studies (current world events). The highest enrollments are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> AP U.S. History 27 Law and Order 26 Sociology 23 					
Science	548	24 + 2 AP Labs	26 + 3 AP Labs	21	+.28 FTE
<p>The increased FTE is driven by more students enrolled in science classes, including an addition section of AP Chemistry. The class numbers support effective science lab instruction.</p>					
Math	561	30	28	20	-.4 FTE
<p>The decrease in FTE is the result of .2 reduction in computer science and a .2 reduction in Geometry. Math classes vary in size due to enrollments in specific courses; the highest enrolled classes are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Computers 24 Honors Geometry 26 Honors Algebra II 23 Probability and Statistics 25 					

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Cuts by Superintendent / Administrative team

Canton High School

- .6 Technology Integration Specialist
- .1 increase for World Language Coordinator
- Guidance – summer days, evening hours, School-to-Career program, secretarial support
- .2 Art Teacher
- .3 Music Teacher
- .2 Family & Consumer Science
- .1 Social Studies Teacher
- .5 World Language Teacher
- .2 Science Teacher

Canton Middle School

- .4 Technology Integration Specialist
- .4 School Psychologist

Canton Intermediate School

- 1.0 Grade 6 Teacher
- .5 Assistant Principal, K – 6
- .2 World Language Teacher
- 504 Paraprofessional/ Tutor
- Campus Greeter/Monitor

Cherry Brook Primary School

- Grade 1 Teacher
- .5 Assistant Principal, K – 6
- Literacy Paraprofessional
- Additional Tutor hours

Technology

- Electronic Classroom initiative HS, MS
- Video Streaming – HS, MS
- AlphaSmarts – CIS
- Video Streaming – CIS
- PC Desktops for classrooms -- HS, MS

Capital Improvement

- Carpet Replacement CBPS, CIS
- Camera Security System, CIS

Additional Cuts to:

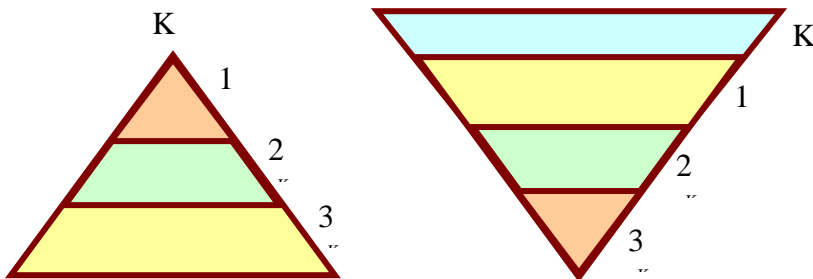
- Curriculum Writing
- Furniture (desks)
- Printing/Publishing
- Office Supplies
- Equipment Repair
- Building Repair
- Custodial Supplies
- Contracted services
- Legal Services

- Kitchen floor replacement, CIS
- Media Center, repair and paint walls
- ADA Compliance (door hardware), CHS
- Additional music storage, CHS, CMS
- Maintenance Building & permanent Storage Module

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6. Pyramid of Support

Several years ago, Canton began using DIBELS, a reading assessment focused on early intervention. Using DIBELS, well-trained tutors can spot gaps in students' early reading and target interventions to address those gaps immediately. At that time, our largest group of tutored remedial students was in the 3rd grade, and there was no reading assessment in the kindergarten program. As a result only about 20 students received tutoring in Grade 1. Now, we have changed that trend. Our goal is to successfully tip this pyramid of support over, with our largest group of tutored students in kindergarten, and the smallest group in the 3rd grade. We are making progress.



Students Receiving Tutorial Support for Reading

	'01/'02	'02-'03	'03-'04	'04-'05	'05-'06	'06-'07	'07-'08
K	0	0	0	0	65	72	65
1	18	22	27	23	40	28	32
2	30	24	31	35	32	16	12
3	31	33	29	36	41	12	23*

- Current Grade 3 class is larger than previous class.

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