



CANTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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October 31, 2008

Dear Editors;

On behalf of Canton Public Schools, I am compelled to take exception to your November cover story "Top High Schools: Motivated, college-bound students, committed faculty and staff – we've got the Top 35 inside." You may have the Top 35 based on an arbitrary formula *using 2-year old data* from 2006, but you certainly don't have the Top 35 based on data today!

Would you present your readers with an article on the economy using employment figures and real estate sales from 2006? Would you expect them to read election predictions based on polls which are 2 years old? Today, education is almost as time-sensitive.

In Canton, your article has set back much of what we have accomplished in two years in our high school. Here's why: This year, Canton had among the highest CAPT scores in the state. Our achievement was recognized in the *Hartford Courant* and celebrated in our community. That accomplishment now looks illusionary to our governing boards and the community. Had you used current research for your article that misunderstanding wouldn't have arisen. You had 11 different criteria and awarded points based on rankings. Had you used today's data, Canton would have been awarded 30 points for scoring 7th in the state on the CAPT Math, 30 points for ranking 10th in CAPT Science, and 30 points for ranking 3rd in the state on CAPT Reading. Our ranking of 15th in the state in CPAT Writing would have earned another 20 points. In just those *four* of your 11 columns, we would have earned 110 points, placing us, at a *minimum*, 22nd on the list with *seven* categories still to go.

Why is this important? Because over the past two years, the teachers, academic department chairs, and administrators at Canton High School have focused their efforts on reading and writing across the curriculum, revising the science curriculum, developing common authentic assessment in math, and embedding instructional strategies into the curriculum, such as CRISS and Power Outlining, both aimed at honing students skills. That work, and our subsequent success, mean a great deal to us.

In Column 1, you ranked schools based on the number of AP courses they offer. Two years ago, we offered nine. Today, we offer 12. But, more significantly how does a school with 540 students compete with schools three times our size? We have a significant number of students taking three, four, and five AP courses; but how many courses can they conceivably take? From where would our

enrollments for additional AP courses come? In Canton, because of our small school status, some courses are offered *every other* year. In fact, in *odd* years (not 2006, however), our students take AP Chemistry. In 2007, 31 students took the AP Chemistry test: 74% received a 5, the highest grade possible; 100% received a 3 or higher. In fact, our 87.4% of students earning 3's or above on their AP tests would have placed us in the top 20 among schools, thereby earning us another 20 points, and with only *five* of the 11 columns in play, now placing us between Glastonbury and Old Saybrook, around #19 on your list.

Finally, I'd like to point out that your headline implies schools were also rated on 'involved parents' and 'committed faculty and staff.' Nothing in the article supports these two areas. Did you know that a group of parents in Canton is so committed to their sons playing football that for four years they have researched and written proposals, budgeted and fundraised, lobbied, advertised, and, on their own, have successfully fielded a Canton High School football team for two years? Despite our small size, twenty-two parents hosted Chinese or Mexican students this fall, and we have six families hosting foreign exchange students for a full year. A group of our parents voluntarily spruce up the schools grounds and the cornstark and mum-lined driveway is testimony to their care and commitment. Our Booster Club and Canton Parents for Music consistently bequest well over \$12,000 a year. We'll schedule over 2,000 parent conferences in November.

Canton is a community with great pride, and your article has hurt us. On behalf of the community I serve, I had to set the record straight.

Sincerely,

Lynn McMullin

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