

To: The Editor

From: Louis M. Daniels
Chair, Canton Board of Education

Re: Dog Search

Date: June 19, 2008

The recent dog search at Canton High School certainly has many people taking notice of our search policy and how to curb substance abuse.....and that's a good thing. The Board of Education wrestles with many issues related to students' health and well being and does its best to educate students and parents on the complex problems of today's society, from eating disorders, to bullying and many things in between. We use many tools to inform, communicate and promote our goals. The search policy has been a Board of Education policy since January 11, 2001, and this is not the first time we have implemented this search procedure in an effort to keep our campus substance free.

This Board of Education is proactive when it comes to our children's safety. The search was a carefully planned action and meant to send a clear message that illegal substances at Canton Schools will NOT be tolerated. Students and Faculty were asked to remain in their classrooms as the dogs walked the hallways. It's important to note that absolutely no student ever came in contact with a dog. An assembly was held immediately following the action to explain to our students and staff the reasons for conducting the search....another opportunity to teach and educate. Letters were sent home at the end of the day to advise parents of the initiative. The timing was selected purposely as we went into prom and graduation party time. The dog search complements our use of breathalyzers for alcohol at various school functions.

The point of using a search or a breathalyzer is not meant to be a "gottcha," but rather to keep kids safe. Our children are too precious not to try different methods. It is our job as the Board of Education to provide a safe and drug-free environment in our schools. I would encourage parents to attend a Community of Concern meeting, or a Board of Education meeting, and be informed on the efforts we are utilizing. It is important that parents work in partnership with the schools to develop a community-based prevention effort to eliminate tolerance of underage drinking and illicit drug use. One of the toughest challenges we face is helping our children avoid the perils of substance abuse. As a parent and Chair of the Board of Education, I am proud that our District has the courage to utilize every method possible to keep our schools and our children safe.

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