

Canton Board of Education Newsletter

Raising the Bar

Volume 2, Issue 1

Spring 2008

In this Issue:

Canton Public Schools Spend Less Than Other Districts..... 2

Canton's Students Continue to Achieve at High Levels 3

Canton Board of Education's Adopted Budget Summary..... 3

Schools Expect 35 New Students..... 4

BOE Contact Information..... 4

Later Start Time Being Studied 4

Space Utilization Study..... 4

Mission: " The Canton Public Schools, in partnership with the staff, parents, and community, provides challenging educational experiences and opportunities for every student, Pre-K through Grade 12, by providing a rigorous and relevant program of studies. We commit ourselves to promoting high student achievement, exhibiting focused educational leadership, and to making sound financial choices. We hold, and act upon, high expectations for all students."

MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD CHAIRMAN

Louis M. Daniels

Canton has always been a town recognized for its sense of community and its outstanding school system. It takes time to build a reputation in which every resident can feel proud. The annual budget season tests our resolve, but to our credit we manage to move forward.

On March 6, 2008, the Canton Board of Education reduced the Superintendent's proposed 2008-2009 budget by .5% from an increase of 6.95% to 6.45% over the 2007-2008 level of spending, effectively putting the District into neutral for the next school year. That decision did not come easily. At the outset, the Board of Education collectively asserted that this budget needed to recognize the challenging economic times our community faces. Purposely, this proposed budget adds no new technology, needed staff additions, or curriculum initiatives. The budget increase is driven almost solely by contractual obligations, along with increases in insurance and energy costs. Some class sizes have increased at the elementary and secondary levels. Maintaining balance across the District at all levels was our goal; and, if this budget is approved, that goal will be achieved.

Our Superintendent of Schools and the administrative staff have done an exemplary job in providing a budget that ensures years of steady improvement are not lost. I must report, though, the past practice of funding education at the minimum level has put us in a "no where left to go" scenario. Requiring further reductions to this budget will tear at the foundation of our school system and dilute the excellent return on investment the community has realized in the Canton Public School District.

To date, budget hearings have drawn just over a dozen people – not a strong showing of support. If you believe that education is a community priority and keeping our standards high has far reaching effects for our town, then please come to the Board of Finance's Public Budget Hearing on April 14th. Only through your voice can we educate others regarding the challenges we face funding our schools. This is a town-wide issue that needs your attention. Please make the time to join us.

FROM THE DESK OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

Kevin D. Case

Even though there's a chill in the air, spring has finally arrived, with warm weather hopefully following! As you know, spring is budget season. Over the past months, the BOE and the District's Administrative Team have been working very hard to develop the Proposed Budget for 2008-2009. The process began in early autumn, with initial budget requests presented to the BOE Finance Subcommittee through a series of workshops.

The subcommittee met several times and provided feedback. The initial budget requests, all justified in moving our school district forward, resulted in a 14% increase over 2007-2008. Realizing the need to be fiscally responsible, several reductions were made. These reductions were extremely difficult to make without affecting the outstanding quality of our school system. We are facing a 17% increase in utilities, including electricity and heat, and an 8.6% increase in employee benefits. We are also facing a 28% increase in special education services to students within our District, as well as to students placed in outside programs, including tuition and transportation costs associated with these placements.

As Superintendent, I proposed a budget to the BOE resulting in a 6.95% increase. To reach this level of spending, every line item in the budget was analyzed and reductions made wherever possible. Class sizes at the elementary and secondary level will increase due to the elimination of a teaching position at the elementary level and the combining of sections in certain courses at the secondary level.

At its March 6th meeting, the BOE reduced the budget further, adopted a budget representing a 6.45% increase, and submitted it to the Board of Finance for their consideration. The BOE will make a formal presentation to the BOF on April 1 outlining these requests. The Board of Finance will then hold a Public Hearing, set for Monday, April 14. You are welcome and encouraged to voice your opinion. The BOF will then meet on Tuesday, April 15, to set the budget and send it to town meeting on Monday, May 12. There, the budget can be voted on for approval, UNLESS there is a petition for a referendum. If that's the case, the meeting will adjourn and a referendum will be set.

The budget season begins in autumn and concludes in the spring. We value your input during this process, so please come out and join us – it's your right as a citizen of Canton!

Log on to our website www.cantonschools.org for more information regarding the 2008-2009 Board of Education Proposed Budget

Upcoming Events:

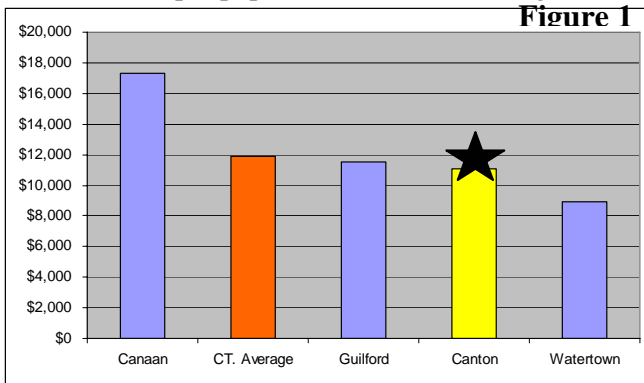
**Monday, April 14
Public Budget
Hearing – 7:00 p.m.
Community Center**

**Tuesday, April 15
BOF sets Budget
4:00 p.m.
Community Center**

**Monday, May 12
Annual Town
Meeting – 7:00 p.m.
HS Auditorium**

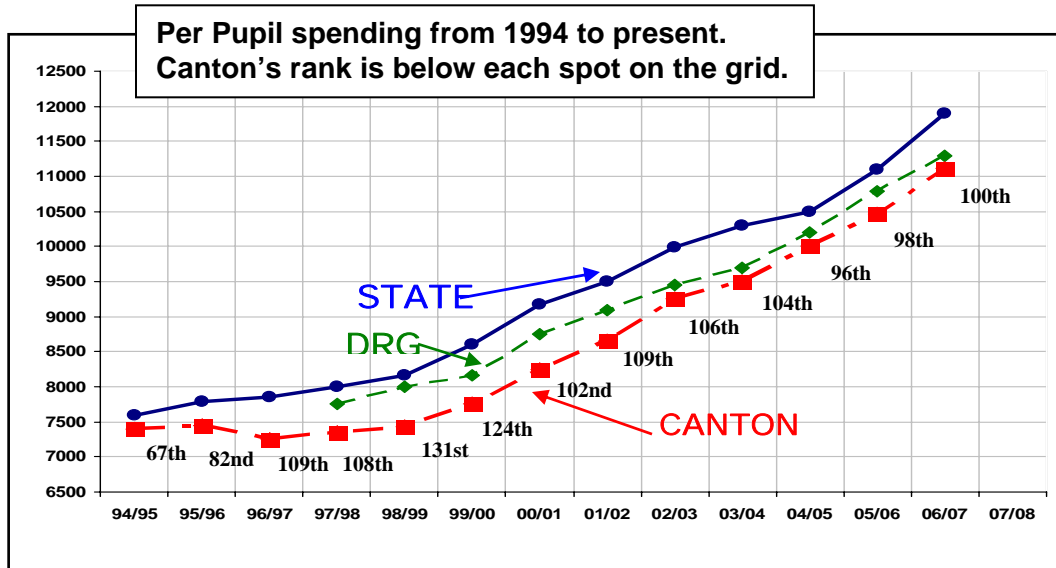
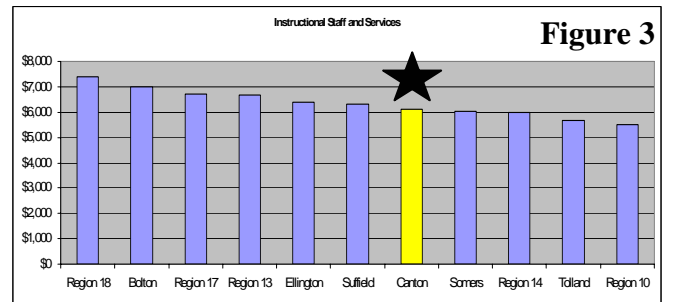
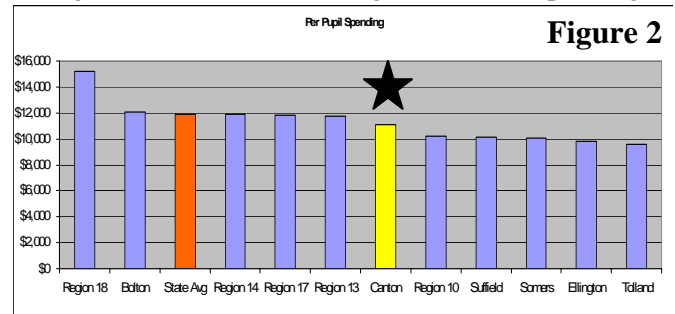
Canton Public Schools Spend Less Than Other Districts

Based upon the 2006-2007 per pupil costs that are reported to the Connecticut State Department of Education, Canton's spending ranks 100th out of 166 school districts. Canton spent \$11,115 per pupil, \$764 below the average per pupil expenditure in Connecticut of \$11,879. During the previous year, 2006, Canton ranked 98th out of the 166 school districts and was only \$724 below the state average, last year dropping an additional \$40 per pupil below the state average.



The charts included here show how Canton's per pupil expenditure compares to the State's per pupil (Fig.1) and to the other schools who share our demographics (our DRG: Fig. 2). Canton's per pupil expenditure ranks 6th out of 11 when compared with the other DRG C school districts. Figure 3 shows Canton's

per-pupil costs for its teachers, their benefits and other related costs of providing instructional services to students. Canton ranks 7th out of 11 school districts in our DRG in this category, spending \$6,095 of the total per pupil cost. Last year, Canton ranked 6th in this category. Although Canton ranks about in the middle of the DRG, its expenses are closer to those of Region 10 (\$5,506, or the lowest level of spending), than they are to Region 18 (\$7,417, or the highest level of spending).



As you can see by looking at the chart to the left, Canton Public Schools' per pupil spending has been lower than the state average and the average of school districts in our Demographic Reference Group (DRG). The Demographic Reference Group (DRG) is a classification system developed by the CT State Department of Education that groups CT School Districts together based on their students' socioeconomic status for the purposes of district-level comparisons. Canton is part of DRG C.

Canton's Students Continue to Achieve at High Levels

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 when compared with districts with similar characteristics as ours, our Demographic Reference Group (DRG), our students achieve among the highest test scores in the state. Approximately 90% of Canton's students score in the top three bands* (out of five) on each portion of the Connecticut Mastery Test, and our data shows that students continue to make gains from Grades 3 to 8. In fact, with only two exceptions (Grade 5 Reading and Writing), students made significant gains in every grade and in every subject area; in fact, Grade 5 students made a 16% gain in Math. Math is a particularly strong achievement area in the district, with "proficiency" scores in the high 90's and 86% or more of students achieving at "goal". Canton's Writing scores "at goal" range from 79% - 86%, and Reading scores "at goal" range from 72% - 88%.

After several years of very solid scores, this year Canton paid particular attention to those students scoring in the highest band, Band 5 or "Advanced." Remarkably, *over half* of our students scored in the "Advanced" band in Math in Grades 6 and 7 (51% and 53% respectively). In Grade 5 Math, 42% scored "Advanced, and 47% did so in Grade 8. Grade 7 students also did well in Reading with 50% scoring in the top band, and 45% in Writing. In Grade 4 Writing, 43% scored "Advanced." Across all grades and subjects, 38% of Canton's students score in Band 5. Canton's students continue to do well throughout their academic careers. The SAT (Scholastic Achievement Test) scores outpaced both the National and State averages by well over 100 combined points. Canton's students averaged 535 in Reading, 554 in Math, and 543 in Writing. The Connecticut averages were 510, 512, and 511 respectively. Advanced Placement (AP) scores were equally strong: 105 AP tests were taken, and 91% of the scores were 3 or higher (the level required to award college credit). Remarkably, in AP Chemistry, where 31 students took the AP test, 100% of them scored 3 or above. Twenty-three of them, or 74%, received 5's, the highest possible score.

* NCLB measures schools according to the % of students scoring at "proficiency," or Band 3, or higher. Canton met its federal Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) goals for NCLB.

Canton Board of Education's Adopted Budget Summary 2008-2009 Increases

Salaries	\$685,682
New Personnel	\$ 43,446
• .5 FTE Kindergarten Teacher	\$28,213
• 1 FTE Special Education Paraeducator	\$15,233
Employee Benefits	\$257,316
Utilities and Fuel	\$124,260
Transportation (K-12 and out-of-district)	\$ 98,390
Out-of-District Tuition	\$157,018
Other Operational	\$259,305
Equipment (from 07-08 levels)	(-\$214,401)
Capital Improvements (from 07-08 levels)	(-\$ 68,900)
2007-2008 Approved Budget	\$20,678,907
Total Operating Budget Increase 6.49%	\$ 1,342,116
Total Budget	\$22,021,023

Schools Expect 35 New Students

Based upon the most recent projections, the Canton Schools could grow by approximately 35 students in the 2008-2009 school year, with much of the growth at the Kindergarten level at Cherry Brook Primary School. The 35 new enrollees is an estimate based on two different CT state projections and a comparison of Canton's past history against those State projections. Our growing enrollment is the driving force behind the need for an additional section of Kindergarten at Cherry Brook Primary School.

Later Start Time Being Studied

The National Institutes of Health have identified adolescents and young adults as a population at high risk for problem sleepiness. There is a growing body of research that supports the notion that after puberty, teens' daily waking and sleeping cycles, or circadian rhythms, shift into a delayed phase. Teens' body clocks make them go to sleep later and wake later than younger children. To accommodate teen sleep needs, school districts from across the country are adjusting middle and high school times to later in the morning. Last Spring, the Canton League of Women Voters hosted a public meeting on the topic of *Implementing Later Start Times*. As a follow-up to this meeting, the Canton Board of Education is establishing a subcommittee to study this issue.

Space Utilization Study

The Canton Board of Education is conducting a space utilization study with the assistance of the consulting firm Drummey Rosane Anderson, Inc. (DRA). A series of community forums have been held regarding the space needs at Cherry Brook Primary School. The Board is currently studying the space needs at Canton Middle/High School in order to develop possible options and recommendations regarding the use of space in our district.

**April 14th – Public Budget Hearing
7:00 pm – Canton Community Center**

Questions, suggestions, and comments are always welcomed by the Canton Board of Education. Contact information is also available on the website at

www.cantonschools.org

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**Please continue to
monitor**

www.cantonschools.org
**for information on the
2008-2009 School Budget**