



Newsletter

Letter from the Principal

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Special points of interest:

- Board of Education Update
- News & Notes
- Activities Update

Dear Parents,

As we come to the close of the first quarter of the year, I wanted to share with you some thoughts on the work we have been doing to make progress on our two major school goals this year. As you likely recall from Open House and previous communication, we have made two areas the focus of some extra effort and attention this year. These are:

- *Improving student writing, including closing the “gender gap”*
- *Helping students become responsible citizens of the Internet*

Improving quality and thoughtful writing in an age of texting, IMing, YouTube and the like is a challenge. Few would argue that productive and successful citizens in the 21st century will need sophisticated literacy skills if they are going to compete in our global society. At the same time we recognize the pervasive importance of teaching stu-

dents to navigate the ever changing world of technology as an important part of their education. Here are some of the ideas we are implementing to help students achieve these goals:

- We are using technology to introduce students to high interest reading material through “Tween Tribune.” Most students have on-line accounts giving them access to a wide variety of articles. With the reading comes an opportunity to blog with students across the country. Your blog entry has to meet standards in order for the teacher to publish it.
- Using a PRS system, 7th graders read editing and revising questions and key in their answer which is recorded and shown on the screen. Data is given to teachers regarding individual responses.
- An on-line site, called *Study Island*, provides access to reading, grammar, science and

math questions which engage students and teach/practice skills at the same time. All 8th graders have accounts and we’re working on getting them for 7th graders as well.

- The addition of quarterly controversial issues in social studies classes and the debates and persuasive writing activity that will go with these important and thoughtful activities.
- Additional time on all four phases of the writing process (pre-writing, drafting, revising, and editing) in subject specific work in each discipline.

You all heard about “Bring Your Parent to Internet Day” and well over 100 of you took us up on that invitation. While the feedback from parents has been very positive, the actions by students (to date) have shown a much more mature decision making ability and a better understanding of the responsi-

Principal's Message (cont'd)

(Continued from page 1)

bilities that go with access to the remarkable technology of the Internet. (I have to add that the number of students that tell me their parents don't allow them to have a social networking "page" is high and does that ever make a positive difference.) The ideas and lessons of "Internet Day" are developed and reinforced in our new experiential course Electronic Communication 7,8. We believe that some of these ideas will improve all students' writing and may well appeal to boys especially. Technology, Tween Tribune, and debating issues all seem like they have potential for engaging boys and girls.

How can you help us at home? Look for something of high interest in the newspaper or a magazine or ask your child for access to Tween Tribune. Have a discussion about an issue from this reading or any controversial issue that's in the news. Encourage your child to support his/her position and connect his/her support to the issue. Praise them when they can defend a position in an intelligent and thoughtful manner, even if you disagree. Look for an opportunity to read something that your child has written. Most importantly, point out to them what was really good in what they have written. Probe for ways to help them think it

through more fully and help them find and correct any careless grammar mistakes. Blog with them in their Electronic Communication class (it's open for you to do so.)

As always, thank you for your generous support. Best wishes for a Happy Thanksgiving.

Sincerely,

Joseph Scheideler
Principal

Marion Blumenthal Lazan to Visit CMS



Canton Middle School welcomes Holocaust survivor and author, Marion Blumenthal Lazan on November 30, 2010! Mrs. Lazan is the author of the memoir, *Four Perfect Pebbles* and her words describe her amazing triumph over catastrophic events that occurred during her childhood as a prisoner in Bergen-Belsen. It also

tells of Mrs. Lazan's strength to find her own path in a world dealing with the Holocaust's aftermath. Mrs. Lazan's story is not one of despair, but rather, one of determination and perseverance while also teaching a message of tolerance and acceptance in a still-troubled world. Students have the opportunity to purchase signed

copies of *Four Perfect Pebbles* prior to Mrs. Lazan's arrival. Parents and guests are also invited to our presentation on the morning of November 30. The time for Mrs. Lazan's presentation is still being determined. Please check the CMS website for further information or call the CMS main office.

Veterans Day at Canton Middle School

With school in session again this year on Veterans Day, we are again planning to use the occasion to honor local veterans, teach the students about the meaning and history of Veterans Day, and re-enforce the importance of service to school, community and country.

This year's ceremony promises to be very special as six veterans of World War II have agreed to attend the assembly and breakfast on November 11. About three dozen other veter-

ans have also graciously accepted the invitation to attend. The students plan on honoring the World War II veterans in a significant way. In addition the Student Council has invited all of the veterans to a breakfast following the assembly.

Any parent is welcome to attend the ceremony and assembly which is scheduled for 8:00 am in the Middle and High School auditorium.

While you are likely reading this newsletter just prior to Veterans Day, if you are a vet-

eran or if you have a veteran in your family, we would still be delighted if you would attend our ceremony and breakfast on the 11th. Please contact the Middle School office 860 693-7712.

Care Packages

As part of our annual Veterans Day activities, our students are once again sending care packages to men and women serving in Afghanistan and Iraq. If you are reading this before November 11, it's still not too late to send in items with your child. Soldiers are requesting the kind of small things that we all take for granted. Snack foods, hand lotions, socks, used DVD's, chap sticks, gum, powdered drinks, energy bars and

the like. Most importantly, they enjoy letters from home. Each advisory has selected a soldier and will be sending our packages. (Funds from the Canton Community of Concern, the Middle School PTO and the Middle School Student Council are covering the cost of postage.) This service project is not about favoring one position or another with regard to the war. It is about supporting the men and women who are

serving in harm's way in our name.

If you have a chance, you might want to go to www.anysoldier.com and read some of the information available there. Try watching the 16 minute video, *Tango Mike*.

New Language Lab Technology

The CMS World Language Department just received a generous donation from the middle school PTO. They provided a class set of special headphones that include a microphone attachment. These headphones are being used in the computer lab to create a language lab. The French and Spanish teachers have all created accounts at linglanguage.com, a free website where the teacher can ask

for responses from students to a number of different media. For example, teachers can ask students to respond orally to a photograph, a video, a written question, or a spoken question. The students can use the new headphones to record themselves directly onto the website. The students will be able to hear what they sound like when they speak in the target lan-

guage. Once they finish their responses, the website will save the individual responses in the teacher's account and teachers will be able to listen to each response. Students can also use this website at home for additional practice if they have speakers and a microphone on their personal computers!

Volunteer Needed for Mock Trial

Canton Middle School has an exceptional history of outstanding Mock Trial Teams. Our success was the result in no small part from the amazing efforts of our two volunteer coaches, *Attorney John Fitzgerald* and *Judge Michael Sheldon*. After twelve years of giving so very generously of

their time and expertise, they have decided to “retire” from the coaching ranks.

We would love to keep our Mock Trial Team going but we would need a volunteer coach in order to do so. The team needs a person with knowledge of the law and the trial process.

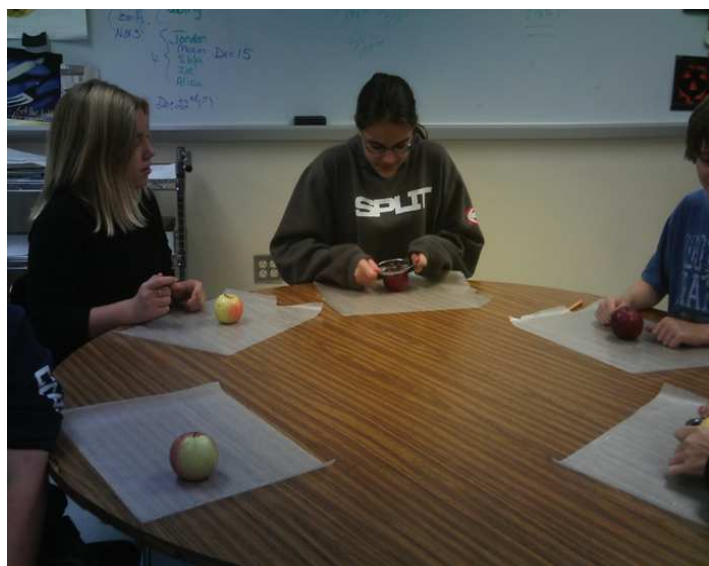
In short we would need a lawyer. The team can practice in the evening or after school depending on the availability of the coach. The first round of the competition this year is in late January. If we are to field a team practice would have to begin very soon.

If you are interested, please call Mr. Scheideler to discuss.

From the Athletic Director...

The goal of the Athletic Department is to improve communication with the parents. Just a few clicks with your mouse you can now have the practice and game schedules of your Middle School athlete. The Middle School Basketball games and practice schedules have recently been posted on line. Travel to the Canton Middle School Website and select "**Athletics**", located on the left side of the page directly under "**School Activities**". Select a month in which to view the calendar of events. Select and click on an event to receive further information regarding directions, locations and times of each event. There has been another feature added to ensure in the event of a change you can now receive updates. Directly under the month listing the events you will see a heading, "**Get real time updates 3 different ways**". Click that section on and sign up to receive real time updates. When a change is made to an event you will be instantly notified.

Science and Nutrition—New 7th Grade Experiential



What do you get when you mix science and nutrition? A new experiential for 7th grade students to learn about how nutrition has an effect on the growth of young teens. This class discusses body image and how advertising is deceptive. We use the interactive food tracking and nutritional analysis tools on the government site called mypyramid.com. Students have an opportunity to discuss healthy snacks, make them, and taste them. Students get to experience using kitchen tools and how to safely prepare and handle foods. Students are encouraged to use their knowledge to help plan and prepare meals and snacks at home. What they like most is creating a healthy pizza, analyzing the nutritional values, and making something that will benefit them. This course creates an opportunity to develop a healthy lifestyle by introducing healthy habits to students through hands-on learning.

News and Notes



- Congratulations to *Miranda Fitzpatrick*, who was selected by the faculty to receive the Farmington Valley Superintendent's Award for Outstanding School and Community Citizenship. In addition to Miranda's commitment to the Student Council and to Canton on T.R.A.K., she organized two fundraisers for HARC, which raised over \$6,000 to support citizens with disabilities and raised awareness at the same time. Miranda is also active in in-service projects through her church.
- As you know from the last newsletter, Canton Middle School said good-bye and Happy Retirement to Mrs. Nan Bartlett on October 29. Mrs. Lorie Carlson, who I'm sure you remember from Canton Intermediate School, took over on November 1. We are delighted to welcome Mrs. Carlson who is a terrific addition to our school. Mrs. Bartlett sends her thanks and best wishes to the very many who stopped by, wrote a note or sent an e-mail to wish her well. She especially thanks the many PTO members who organized a great luncheon in Mrs. Bartlett's honor on October 27.
- Under the direction of *Ms. Marsha Jorgensen*, the SFS Club (Substance Free Students) organized several activities for **Red Ribbon Week** during the last week of October. The club sponsored "Peace Out Against Drug Abuse on October 29. There was excellent participation throughout the school.
- There are four early release days in November – 16, 17, 18 for conferences and the 24th to start the Thanksgiving break.
- PTO Pie Sale Pick up is **Monday, November 15th** from 4:00 – 6:00 in the Middle School cafeteria. Please don't forget to pick up your order as we do not have storage for pies not picked up.

Activities Update

Substance Free Students have been busy this last month. We welcomed in many new seventh graders to our club. A new "Peace Out to Drugs" theme and logo was adopted for our t-shirts and all club members received them at the last meeting. Also, many volunteered at the Canton Pre-School's Annual Halloween party last month and participated in face painting, games, and activities with our youngest members of the Canton community. Red Ribbon Week is a world wide effort to raise awareness of making healthy choices and remaining drug free. We planned activities, morning announcements, and a "Peace Out to Drugs" theme clothing day for our entire school on October 29th. We had 12 seventh & eighth grade advisories with 100% participation. In December we are planning our annual Caroling event and book wrapping at Barnes and Noble. New members are always welcome!

FCCLA had the greatest number of students turn out ever! This lively group of 25 really enjoys the sweeter side of life and so all of our cooking projects have involved baking. We have made chocolate chip cookies, cupcakes, muffins, and peanut butter chocolate chip cookies so far. If you smell the fabulous aromas wafting through the halls, it just might be our club's efforts. New members are always welcome.



The Seasons of the Board of Education

The Board of Education meets on the 2nd and 4th Tuesday of each month, with meetings lasting two and a half to three hours. Every meeting begins with a public forum – a chance for the public to address the Board. There are also reports from the Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent, Business Manager, the BOE Chairperson, our student representatives, and the BOE’s subcommittees. Agenda items might include department updates, curriculum, policy revisions, approval of field trips or donations to the schools, and staff leaves and resignations. The Board Chair and Vice Chair meet monthly with the Superintendent to set the upcoming agendas, resulting in what we call the “Seasons of the Board of Education.”

Fall: The Board reviews new staff hires, testing reports, and enrollment data; analyzes summer and end-of-year financial reports; tours each school, viewing improvements and prioritizing future projects; sets its formal goals -- the roadmap for the year ahead – which the Board will revisit throughout the year; hears presentations from the principals on their Continuous Improvement Plans; reviews the October 1 report and class sizes.

Winter: The Board reviews and adopts the Canton High School program of studies, makes its new subcommittee assignments and elects new officers.

While financial reports are on every meeting’s agenda, in January, the budget season begins in earnest. The Board reviews each administrator’s budget request; the Superintendent presents his budget to the Board; numerous meetings and revisions take place, including meetings with the Finance Board. and the education budget is finally adopted by the BOE.

Spring is budget season. The Board holds public forums leading up to the Town Meeting in May; sets the next year’s calendar and current graduation date; goes on the road for “Canton Celebrates” at each school; and conducts a formal self-evaluation process and formally evaluates the Superintendent.

If you have interest in a particular issue, contact a Board Member and we can tell you when it may be appearing on our agenda. The Board welcomes the public at every meeting, and agendas and minutes are always available at www.cantonschools.org.