

Canton Public Schools

Opening Minds... Transforming Lives

Fall 2019

Schools Celebrate Veterans Day

See more on pages 6-7



Our Mission

Our mission is to prepare independent, productive, respectful and responsible citizens who contribute to an ever-changing world. We pursue continuous improvement while honoring our strong educational legacy and traditions. We unite with families and the community to provide challenging educational experiences that promote the intellectual, physical, social and emotional potential of our students.

Our Vision

As a leader among schools and a source of pride in our community, the Canton Public Schools enrich the present and shape the future of its students by opening minds and transforming lives.

Our Values

Collaboration ~ Kindness ~ Integrity

We partner with our students, educators, staff, families and community to: Work together with open minds, creativity and innovation; Look for ways to treat others with kindness and respect; Do our very best, be honest and hold each other accountable.

from the superintendent

I hope this message finds you well and that you and your family are enjoying the final days of the autumn season. One of our School District's Goals this year continues to be to integrate Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) skills into the curriculum. Staff members are involved in training on the best teaching practices that integrate these skills.

Emotional-social intelligence is defined as a cross section of interrelated emotional and social competencies and skills that determine how effectively we understand and express ourselves, understand others and relate to them, and cope with daily demands. Research has demonstrated that students who understand and apply these skills do better academically, have fewer behavior problems, have better social interactions, and are generally, happier. For the second year we continue to work with our Grade 7 students and are expanding our program on resiliency this current year to include Grade 8 and 9 students.

You will read more about this outstanding program and our effective partnership with the Farmington Valley Health District in presenting important information and strategies to our students in the pages that follow. You will be hearing much more about our work in these areas in the months to come. You will find examples of each



Kevin D. Case

of these components as you read in this latest edition of our Canton Public Schools District Newsletter. I continue to be so proud of the accomplishments of our staff and students.

As you have heard, our Assistant Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Jordan Grossman, has resigned his position to become the Superintendent of Schools in Granby, CT, effective January 2nd. Dr. Grossman began his career in Canton as Assistant Principal of Canton High School twenty years ago. He then went on to serve as the Principal of Canton Intermediate School for six years and has served as Assistant Superintendent for the past seven years. I know you will join me in wishing Dr. Grossman well as he takes on this next challenge in his career. We will miss him!

Thank you for your support of our award winning School District. Have a wonderful Holiday Season with your families. ■

from the board chair

I hope this newsletter finds you enjoying the holiday season with your families. There have definitely been many opportunities to celebrate the season, from winter concerts to the Barnes and Noble Book Fair to tree lightings and many more. This November, I was fortunate to present along with Superintendent Case, Becky Truscio, 5th grade teacher, and Deene Morris of Inspire Leadership at the Connecticut Association of Boards of Education. We presented to other districts around the state how our district is approaching social and emotional learning. The main difference in what we are doing here in Canton, is that we are not just teaching a set of skills to students, but we are infusing social and emotional learning and awareness throughout the system, from administrators to teachers and staff. It is important to have a common language across the system when teaching social and emotional learning.

Each year, our district runs what we call the EQ Academy for teachers. Approximately 40 teachers each year get specialized workshops where they learn about their own emotional intelligence strengths and areas for improvements. As part of this workshop, they share and strategize about how to take this



Julie Auseré

knowledge into their classrooms to help their students increase their own awareness and understanding around emotional intelligence. Next time you are conferencing with teachers, I encourage you to ask them if they have participated in the EQ Academy and how they are using that learning to model and teach emotional intelligence in their classroom.

After the winter recess, the Board of Education will begin the budget process for the 2020-2021 school year. As always, your input is critical to this process. You will find important budget dates at the end of this newsletter. I encourage you to be informed and be part of the process. Enjoy the winter recess with your families and I wish you all a very Happy New Year! ■

Canton High School Wall of Fame



From left to right: Seth Mastrocola, Hollace Bristol, Reggie Tucker, Ashley Thrall. Students from left: Alex Lederman, Marta Frawley, Ty Adams, Meg Babbitt, David Cabeceiras.

Seth Mastrocola - Class of 2003 - went directly into bootcamp, then NROTC through Southern, has served overseas and is currently works as Operations Officer for the National Guard

Robert Quick - Class of 1950 - self-taught artist specializing in nature and southwest landscape

Ashley Thrall - Class of 2000 - Civil engineer who has worked with CERN and NASA; currently works at Myron and Rosemary Noble

Reggie Tucker - Class of 1987 - Coach and social studies teacher at Classical Magnet High School

Hollace Bristol - Class of 1964 - Doctoral degree in Curriculum and Instruction; associate Superintendent of Schools in Arizona. ■

Teacher of the Year: Nora M. MocarSKI

Whether it's leading Canton High School's Model U.N. team, coordinating a comprehensive simulation of Canton's 2019 local election, inviting local veterans to speak about their experiences at Canton High School, there's no doubt that Nora M. MocarSKI is passionate about bringing social studies to life.

It's such passion, the willingness to have a little fun and most importantly, the deep concern for helping students navigate life, that earned MocarSKI, Social Studies Department chair and teacher for grades 7-12, the honor of being Canton's 2019-20 Teacher of the Year.

"We have objectives and we have curriculum, but there's different ways to get there. And it's the constant experimenting that I like.... Lessons are never the same," she said of her teaching. "You're always striving to make it better and there's sort of a science to it, but there's also an art to it. I'm always figuring out ways to make it better, to help students find the aha moment."

MocarSKI discovered a love of History, especially U.S. History, early. She was inspired by the likes of John Winthrop and Martin Luther King Jr.

"I always liked U.S. history, just because it rolled out like a movie in my head," she said. "[People] faced such terrible odds and yet they were successful"

With so many pressures of modern society, MocarSKI seeks to inspire her students, not only with stories from past and present-day geopolitical landscapes, but in their own lives. Some days, students hear an in-person account from a local official or poignant one from a veteran.

"Research shows that you learn when you're learning experience is emotional, you're more likely to retain. I try to make it an emotional experience as best I can so kids will remember, so bringing in a human being to talk about their personal experiences is one of the best ways to do it."

At convocation earlier this year she told her fellow teachers about a

situation in which a fellow teacher and other staff were able to help a student express herself artistically in order to deal with a tough family situation.

"These are powerful moments in our classrooms that we control," she said. "That can turn a student away from despair and point them toward hope in the blink of an eye. It is these small decisions teachers make that matter."

MocarSKI went on to talk about that power that teachers have and the responsibility of using it wisely and always to inspire and empower students.



Nora M. MocarSKI, Canton's 2019-20 Teacher of the Year, speaks in a senior government class, the group that spearheaded a simulation of the 2019 Canton election.

MocarSKI has chaired her department in Canton since 2006. Prior to that she held a similar position at Wamogo Regional Middle/High School in Litchfield, which came after Social Studies teaching assignments in Torrington, North Haven and Haddam-Killingworth.

Helping pave the way for her teaching career was MocarSKI's love of sports. She grew up in Stamford and excelled athletically at Westhill High School. During her senior year, with a little help, she sent a resume, complete with video, to colleges and got the chance to play Division 1 softball for Ohio University. She excelled at the sport and formally decided to go into Social Studies education.

After school, with Social Studies jobs hard to land, she taught at Liberty English School in Fukuoka-ken, Japan and spent a year teaching English to students of all ages while soaking in the culture and historic sites.

Upon her return, MocarSKI took a position as high school Social Studies teacher at Haddam-Killingworth High School.

The work was much harder than expected, but as it turned out, she was the victim of budget cuts. For a short time, she worked for Oxford Health Plans, but when a long-term social studies substitute position opened up at North Haven High School, she decided to give teaching another try.

She loved it.

Permanent jobs were still hard to find, but she managed, in 1995, to get a job teaching social studies at

school volleyball and serves on the Winchester Board of Education.

As department chair, a considerable amount of MocarSKI's time is spent in a leadership role.

"The beauty about this position is I can have an effect in other rooms and I like to inspire my staff to try different things because it's fun," she said. "That's kind of exciting that I have reach."

And it helps that she loves working with her colleagues. At convocation, in addition to thanking her family and administrators and some fellow staff, she took the time to highlight the individual talents of each social studies teacher.

In her role in Canton, MocarSKI, known affectionately as Ms. Mo, is involved in several extracurricular efforts. In the fall, she ran an Election Simulation that mirrored Canton's own.

At convocation, high school principal Drew DiPippo touched on a sampling of her other activities.

"As an AP teacher, her students have been extremely successful on all measures, she is a member of the CT Council of Social Studies, served on state of CT frameworks committees and is coordinator of a community centered Veterans Day commemoration program that honors our veterans with dignity and class. She leads an amazing and growing Model UN program here at CHS where she leads several very prepared students to UConn and Yale. Yearly, she organizes voter registration assemblies for our 12th grade students and has supported exchange programs by hosting Chinese teachers in her home. She herself also a world traveler seeking knowledge and adventure to share with her students."

Superintendent Kevin Case said MocarSKI is an excellent choice to represent Canton teachers.

"Ms. MocarSKI has been an inspiring Social Studies teacher for the Canton Public Schools for the last thirteen years," he said. "Through her student-centered lessons and activities, she brings history to life in her classroom each and every day. She is representative of the outstanding teaching staff within the Canton Public Schools." ■

Paraeducator of the Year: Becky Karson

Shortly after Becky Karson's family moved to Canton a neighbor told her about a paraprofessional job opening at the Canton Public Schools.

Karson has a Bachelor's in French and Spanish from what is now Worcester State University and had worked in insurance, banking and global travel. She might not have been an educator by trade, but it wasn't the first time someone had suggested the field.

"I was encouraged to be a teacher because I like to work with people of other cultures and I was like 'no, no I'm not doing that,' she said. "Life is funny. I do really enjoy working with kids. I have grown a lot working here, personally and professionally."

Canton school officials clearly agree, having designated Karson as the district's 2019-20 paraprofessional of the year.

It was 2006 when Karson was first hired at Cherry Brook Primary School. After a year, she took some time off and returned to Cherry Brook part way through the 2010-11 school year to work one-on-one with a special education student. When that student entered fourth grade, she followed along to Canton Intermediate School.

"I've been here ever since and love it here," she said.

Today, Karson generally does not work one on one, although like many special education paraprofessionals, she is willing to adapt to the task on hand and sometimes fills in for such a role. Generally speaking, however, she is part of the sixth-grade Yellow Team with teachers Jennifer Babcock, Tina Roy, Jen Perry and Rachel DeMillo.

Karson follows a group of students with challenges such as learning disabilities, but works hard to make them feel fully integrated.

"I travel around the room and blend in with the other students as well," she said.

She's there to reinforce lessons, keep students on task and take care of other needs. Those include making graphic organizers, modifying curriculum for some students, making



Canton paraprofessional of the year Becky Karson, center is congratulated by state Board of Education chairman Allan B. Taylor and state BOE member Erin D. Benham.

copies, correcting homework and collaborating with teachers.

Karson loves to establish relationships with the students in her care.

The job takes a fine balance of authority, but also have fun and build trust that often leads to kids sharing their "struggles, their victories and silly things in their lives too."

"I like to have fun with them and trying to find that balance," she said.

Helping on that end is the fact that she often spends a good part of the day with the kids, allowing her to have some perspective to help them or talk with the team of teachers and, if necessary, counselors and others.

"I get a good overview of how their day is," she said.

It also allows her to work with much of the school staff.

"I have some connection with a majority of the staff on a daily basis," she said. "It's definitely never a dull moment. There's not a whole lot of down time but when there is, I feel like I should be doing something; it's an odd feeling and I don't like to be idle very long."

She keeps busy at home as well, lives in Canton and loves to garden, pursue artistic endeavors, hike, cook, bake and spend time with the family, which includes her husband Jason

and their children Robbie, 19, and Hannah, 12.

She's also found a second family at CIS.

"The team that I work with is amazing, the environment here at school is excellent," she said. "The staff is all supportive of one another."

Still, she was surprised when former principal Kevin Hanlon told her she was picked as paraprofessional of the year.

"I had no idea what he was up to, but he had this grin on his face like a dad," she said. "As much as I was honored, my fear of ever being nominated was having to give that speech because I don't like to be in front of that number of people ... but I managed."

In that speech she especially recognized her family Superintendent Kevin Case, Hanlon, Dr. Murdica and her team. She also spoke of the kind words in her nomination letter.

"The heartfelt sentiments in the letters nominating me for this were beyond anything I could have imagined being said of me. To me, I just come to work and do the best that I can. I don't necessarily stop and think about the impression I am making on others. Truth be told, without the support we all give each other, we couldn't do what we do. So, I thank

you guys for always having my back. I truly couldn't do what I do without your own example as my model of how to build into the lives and education of the students we are given each year. The support and encouragement you give me on a daily basis means more than you know, and I am thankful that I can count on every single one of you to have my back both professionally and personally."

For Karson the greatest reward often comes near the end of the school year, when students come thank her or point to some area of the aforementioned impact. It's often something she didn't even think of much.

"The thing you think was small [often] really made a big impact," she said. "That's rewarding when you know that you've helped somebody – and those aha moments you have when you're able to convey the lesson."

Karson was nominated by several teachers. One Tina Roy, 6th grade math teacher, who noted Karson is "able to develop a strong rapport with students almost immediately." She is "extremely organized and very dedicated to her work." Roy said Karson is a "dynamic force in the classroom. Becky is an accessible paraprofessional who also takes the job of educating children very seriously and with genuine feeling." ■

Sports in Review: Fall 2019

This fall was the right time for Granby and Canton to join forces on the football field because of low numbers at each school.

About 20 players on the first-year co-op team were from Canton and 33 were students at Granby Memorial. As standalone teams prior to this year, both schools had qualified for the CIAC playoffs – Canton in 2014, Granby in 2015. Neither team came close to getting back to the postseason – until this fall.

Eight teams qualified for the playoffs in each of the four classes. Ranked in the No. 8 spot before playing its final game, Granby/Canton qualified for the state tournament but lost in the first round to Waterford, 10-6.

“The way the season’s been going, it makes sense. Nothing’s been easy,” Shortell said. “Just crazy things – losing in double overtime [to Rockville], winning in overtime [against Stafford/Somers/East Windsor]. It just makes sense it wasn’t an easy way to get into the playoffs.”

Nearly a year to the day of its win over Old Saybrook/Westbrook, Granby and Canton were on opposite sidelines on the night before Thanksgiving last year. From 2011-18, the teams played each other in the final game.

Last year, Granby beat Canton 20-6 in sub-freezing temperatures and on a snow-covered field at Canton High. But with the number of players expected to keep dropping, officials at both schools decided the teams should merge into one program.

“My message [to the players] was when we run a program, we’re a family. It doesn’t matter where you’re from or what you do. That’s how we take it and still take it that way,” Shortell said. “I think the kids enjoyed it. It worked out.”

The players from Canton High traveled by bus to practice in Granby four or five days a week. Four of the five home games were played in Granby, the host school, and one was played on Canton’s turf field.

“It’s been a great experience,” said Carter Gavin, a senior at Canton. “Coming out to Granby all the time, getting together with these guys, we made bonds that will last for the rest of our lives.”

“I think it almost helped that Granby and Canton used to be rivals because

we knew each other that much better. Of course, there was a bonding process, but it’s not like it was difficult by any means or long. Over the season we got to know each other better. There were never any clashes between Canton and Granby kids. They were very welcoming to the Canton kids. The Canton kids were very receptive to coming over here. I just think it was very good.”

Assistant coach Dante Boffi, the former head coach for the Canton team who joined the staff of the first-year co-op., said the players from both schools formed an instant bond because the nature of the sport is such that it brings people together.

“Honestly, it was like you never would’ve known they were archrivals,” Boffi said. “I think the prospect of coming together and winning overshadowed any other aspects that could’ve entered in. ... Everyone had their eye on the prize. I’m just thankful the kids achieved what they set out to do, that’s to make states.”

Boys Soccer

Record: 13-3-2

Tournament Results: Made it to the quarter-finals of the Class S state tournament

All-NCCC: Ty Aleksa, Jack Freedenberg, Jackson Miner, Spencer Mix

All-State: Ty Aleksa, Jackson Miner

All-New England: Ty Aleksa

Girls Soccer

Record: 6-10-1

Tournament Results: Made it to the first round of the Class S state tournament

All-NCCC: Julia Lau, Julia Langou

All-State: Julia Langou

Field Hockey

Record: 12-5-1

Tournament Results: Made it to the quarterfinals of the Class S state tournament

All-NCCC: Leightyn Antarsh, Abby Charron, Ashley Huff, Fiona McNally, Poet Watson

All-State: Abby Charron and Fiona McNally

Volleyball

Record: 10-11

Tournament Results: Made it to the 1st round of the Class S state tournament

All-NCCC: MacKenzie Archangelo



Field hockey and unified sports

Boys Cross Country

Record: 10-3

Tournament Results: Finished 6th in the Class SS meet

All-NCCC: Jack Dendinger

Girls Cross Country

Record: 10-3

Tournament Results: Finished 8th in Class SS meet

All-NCCC: Maevae Balavender, Julia Caputo, Grace First

All-State: Julia Caputo

Football

Record: 8-3

Tournament Results: Lost in the first round to Waterford, 10-6.

All-Pequot: Not yet announced

All-State: Not yet announced

Individual and Team highlights...

- Field Hockey Coach Margaret Bristol was named Coach of the Year for Class S
- Abby Charron, Peter Fuller, Ashley Huff and Chelsea Mitchell all signed letters of intent to participate in athletics in college.
- Julia Caputo finished 15th at the State Open and 32nd at the New England Cross Country Championships.
- All of our fall sports qualified for the state tournaments!

Community Service...

Canton teams raised money for Play4theCure through our pink week games and selling pink shirts.

Sports did their own community service like giving gifts to hospitals and homeless shelters, walking for hunger and sending food to our military overseas.

Leadership Opportunities...

The Warrior Leadership Council was created to complete workshops on characteristics of leadership. Coaches recommended their captains and other



leaders on their teams to be on the council.

We won the Michael’s Class Act Sportsmanship Award for the fourth time in five years!

Our varsity sports took one day of their practices to practice their sport with our unified team.

Booster Club...

A strength and conditioning program was set up and will be run by Mike Campitelli during the weeks leading up to each season. A new scorer’s table was purchased for volleyball, basketball and wrestling. ■

Schools Celebrate Veterans Day

Canton High School

On November 8, 2019, Canton High School celebrated Veterans Day with a school-wide assembly, which included music, speeches, a video, and special guests.

Canton High School's Social Studies teacher, Kerry Hartley, and Social Studies Department Chair, Nora Mocarski, arranged the speeches and order of the assembly. They also coordinated the cordial greeting and entrance for the veterans and their families.

The program started out with Mocarski welcoming everyone to the Canton High School Veterans Day program. During her welcoming speech, Mocarski explained that the focus of this year's program would be different than in years' past.

Mocarski also discussed the importance of the approaching anniversary that will take place this year: the 100 year anniversary of women gaining the right to vote. She acknowledged the ongoing women's suffrage movement which allowed women the most fundamental right of a democracy.

The highlight of the event, however, was the attendance of 100-year-old World War II veteran and Holocaust liberator Morton Katz, who, to this day, practices law in our neighboring town, Avon.

Katz served in the Army intelligence and civil affairs after graduating from Iowa State College in 1940 with a degree in Organic Chemistry. He served in the 82nd Airborne in World War II, seeing action in North Africa, Italy, France and Germany. After his discharge, Katz attended law school at the University of Connecticut. Following a long legal career in the Hartford

area, Katz became a public defender in 1997. In order to get him to stop practicing law, Katz claims they'll have to carry him out of the courtroom.

He was interviewed by Canton High School students Lauraine Nicholls and James Carlson on the stage during the ceremony.

Katz served in World War II. After the bombing of Pearl Harbor, he reported to Fort Benning in Georgia, then served in Italy, France, Germany in 1942.

In 1944, his platoon helped liberate the

Wobbelin Concentration Camp in Ludwigslust. Katz said the concentration camps were "disgusting and terrible." He talked more about his involvement in this liberation, and said the monstrosities of human treatment at the camp was horrid.

Despite witnessing the horrors of war, Katz has a positive outlook, and was keen to share a life lesson with students. "Pay it back," he said, especially if it's kindness. Katz's uncle gave him that advice as a teenager and it's stuck with him ever since. Katz hopes that his uncle's words will inspire students to do the same.

After the live interview was conducted with Katz on the stage, he received a standing ovation from everyone in the auditorium.

One of the things that Canton High School did to prepare for the program was to assign the entire sophomore class the task of writing 100 letters of thanks and congratulations to Katz (one for every year he's been alive). The school's Tech Ed teacher, Brandon Richard, took on the construction of a wooden gift box for letters, which was presented to Katz.



BY STUDENT WRITERS LAUREN ESCHENBRENNER, MARA LLOYD, and KAYLEY PASKO

Additionally, there was a lot of student participation in the program. About 33 band students played the song "Service Veterans Salute" as the veterans were escorted into the auditorium. Canton High School sophomore Braeden Humphrey led the Pledge of Allegiance and moment of silence for those who have served. Students stayed standing for the Canton High School Chorus' version of "The Star Spangled Banner."

Canton High School sophomore Mara

Lloyd thanked everyone who helped out organizing the program as well as all the veterans who were able to take time out of their day to participate in this program.

After the assembly, individual veterans went to their assigned classes to talk to the students on a smaller scale about their service and answer any questions they had. This part of the program was designed to be an educational experience so that both students and service members would benefit from the day's events. ■



100-year-old World War II veteran and Holocaust liberator addresses and assembly at Canton High School. **INSET:** Brandon Richard, Technology teacher crafted this box and Mrs. Hartley and Kristy Benjamin's 10th grade social studies students filled it with 100 letters for Mr. Katz.



Col. Roy V. Walton, vice commander for the 103rd Airlift Wing, Connecticut Air National Guard, was one of numerous veterans who spoke in classrooms following the high school assembly.

Canton Middle School

At Canton Middle School, the day began with Student Council members interviewing over 20 veterans to learn about their service. The interviews were followed by a schoolwide program in the auditorium, during which students expressed gratitude for the veterans' military service with a video and poetry reading. The featured guest, David Rodriguez, an officer in the Canton Police Department, a drill sergeant and active member of the National Guard, and father of a Canton Middle School 8th grader, shared stories of his service.



Canton Intermediate School

At Canton Intermediate School, the ceremony focused on all veterans and was family oriented in some ways. "Most veterans invited are members of a CIS student's family. We had 47 veterans – all but three have a family member (child, niece, grandchild, nephew) who attends Canton Intermediate School," Canton Intermediate School interim principal, Nancy Larson, said. As veterans entered, the song "Beyond the Wind" was being performed by the CIS wind ensemble.

The student participation was outstanding, including band and chorus students, and students who read compositions. Once the program was over, "Veterans then broke up into three groups to have conversations with each grade level... for 20-30 minutes," Larson said.



Cherry Brook Primary School

On November 11, Cherry Brook Primary School welcomed 52 veterans to our school. Many veterans visited classrooms to speak about their service and experiences in the armed forces. Then, the whole school gathered in the gymnasium to honor the veterans with poems, songs and cheers. It was a patriotic, enthusiastic salute to our veterans," Cherry Brook Primary School Principal, Andrew Robbin said.

These district wide programs have become a tradition to honor and thank our local troops for everything they've done, and raise student awareness of patriotic service. ■



Rebecca Coiteux joins CIS family

Post-college life didn't start out as planned for Rebecca Coiteux. After graduating (summa cum laude) with a Bachelor of Science degree from Southern Connecticut State University, she planned to play basketball overseas but suffered an injury just three months before she was due to leave. She had attended Southern – journeying from her home in Hyde Park, VT — on a basketball scholarship, but the injury didn't keep her from the sport. Instead she coached for a year and started pursuing a master's in health education.

And it was really basketball – playing, coaching, and mentoring – that steered her toward education.

“Playing basketball at that level is what gave me my taste for leadership,” she said.

Coiteux's education pursuits brought her to Farmington, where she taught health in grades 7 and 8. Approximately 3 years at the school, she began working toward her sixth-year degree in Educational Leadership, which she obtained in 2012 from Central Connecticut State University.

Meanwhile in Farmington she also took leadership roles at Irving A. Robbins Middle School, including Special Areas Team Leaders, Wellness Department Coordinator and

Administrative Intern.

After seven years in Farmington, Coiteux took a job as assistant principal of Dr. Robert H. Brown Middle School in Madison.

“When I first moved into [administration], I was fearful I would miss working with students on a daily basis, but I found I do similar work but it's with teachers,” she said, adding that she feels she can still affect what happens in the classroom by working closely with teachers and guiding them. She also found she loved to get a closer look at how a district works.

“From an administrative perspective, you see the bigger picture of the school and the system in general and where kids are going – from kindergarten up through high school.”

Coiteux spent most of her time in Madison at Brown, a 5-6 school, but this year, due to redistricting, took the position of assistant principal at Walter C. Polson Middle School, which is grades 6,7,8.

Also in Madison, where she stayed for a little more than seven years, Coiteux took on numerous leadership roles.

Coiteux was unanimously appointed by the Board of Education Oct. 29.

Superintendent Kevin Case noted that after the past principal, Kevin Hanlon, announced in August that he had accepted another job offer, the

district received more than 60 applications. Coiteux rose to the top in both the application pool and in interviews, he said.

In addition to those in-person interviews, several members of the committee visited the Madison school district and heard great things about Coiteux.

They talked of her as being a collaborator, empathetic, reflective, instructional leader authentic, trusting, friendly, compassionate and student centered,” Case said. “It's with great pride and enthusiasm that I recommend to you, the Board of Education, that we appoint Rebecca Coiteux the next principal of Canton Intermediate School.”

Coiteux was grateful for the honor and thankful her husband Will and their kids Jackson, 4, David, 2, Emma, 8 months, were there for the moment. Also, there was a large welcoming committee from Canton Intermediate School.

“I appreciate you allowing me to bring my family to something like this,” she said. “I feel the last seven years and two months has prepared me and it's all been for this. I cannot wait to join the family at CIS and for that reason it's fantastic that [my family] was here and able to meet my new crew and I thank you all for welcoming me. It is



BOE chair Julie Auseré, Superintendent Kevin Case with Rebecca Coiteux, her husband Will and their kids Jackson, David and Emma.

an incredible honor.”

Coiteux started Dec. 2. She lauded Nancy Larson, who served as interim principal for the start of the year.

“She started the year off on a great foot,” she said. “Everything is running smoothly now, and my goal is to keep that going.”

Outside of school, Coiteux and her husband love to garden and spend time outside. Coiteux might have taken up running once her basketball career was over, but these days she's mostly chasing kids and would have it no other way.

“I'm a homebody and I love my family,” she said. “They are first and foremost. They refill my cup.” ■

Spotlight on West African Drumming

BY ABBY CHARRON



Under the auditorium lights, a group of students sat in chairs behind unique and beautiful drums.

As they effortlessly slapped their instruments, the music filled the room, its rhythms creating a song the students had been patiently rehearsing. It was something that seemed so difficult, yet the students did with confidence and delight. The performance, which took place at the Connecticut Association of Boards of Education/Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents conference, was the culminating experience of the West African Drumming Class at Canton Middle School. Not only does this experiential teach students in 8th grade basic musical skills, it also includes culture, auditory senses, and opportunities like no other class has to offer. The West African Drumming class was introduced in the 2017-2018

school year by Elizabeth DiDomenico, an instrumental music teacher at the intermediate, middle, and high schools. This middle school experiential runs twice a year, and is open to any student who wants to join, regardless of musical background. There's no prerequisite to be in band or chorus; anyone can come and take the class.

When DiDomenico was asked to create a new experiential, she thought West African Drumming would be a perfect way for students to experience a new type of music, after previously teaching the class in Southington. Students can choose from various instruments, such as accompaniment drums, lead drums, bells and shakers. The drums and musical pieces both originated directly from Ghana.

In addition to teaching drumming techniques, the class shows students the importance of the other components needed to create music especially community effort and listening skills. Collective drumming is the only way to make the music and students need to perfect their auditory senses because they are taught orally, with no sheet music. Students need to learn the background of the culture to grasp the meaning of what is being played,



Members of Elizabeth DiDomenico's drumming experiential perform at the Connecticut Association of Boards of Education/Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents conference.

looking at the West African culture through a beautiful lens.

“There's also a mindfulness component to [drumming] too because it's kind of repetitive, so it's about staying present and in the moment,” DiDomenico said.

The class has become so popular that many of the students who requested it have been turned away because it fills up quickly.

On Saturday, Nov. 16, the West

African Drumming group was selected to perform at the CABA/CAPSS conference at the Mystic Marriott Hotel in Groton. The students opened up the convention, and provided a workshop afterwards, where they led some of the superintendents and board of education members through the drumming.

“I'm really thankful for the support that Canton has given this program,” DiDomenico said. ■

New Assistant Principal is Dr. Ruth Kidwell

Dr. Ruth Kidwell is certainly no stranger to leadership at Canton schools. Since 2014 she has supervised the English Department for Grades 7 to 12 and proven herself a collaborator for the district.

Now as assistant principal at Canton High School, Kidwell gets the chance to take things a step further and work more closely with a broad range of students and staff and help the school run proficiently and stay ahead of the curve working toward a positive climate.

"It's certainly involves new challenges," Kidwell said. "I love being a part of bigger conversations about direction of the school and the district."

After Eric Verner left the post to take the principalship at East Hampton High School, Kidwell was appointed to the post on an interim basis in July. In September, the Board of Education formally appointed her to the position.

One major focus in her new position is student climate. Some feel that the position emphasizes student discipline, but that is only a small part of it. The bigger focus is to strive for a positive climate and get to the root of any issues facing youth and investigate trends and causes to truly help students.

Part of the role is "being heavily involved in school culture and climate," she said. "Yes, the side piece of that is student discipline so that the behavior bit, but it's really part of trying to grow a more positive culture. We're no different

than any other school in terms that we have our areas to work on and things that are happening.

Kidwell also oversees the student intervention team, facilitates meeting for faculty, departments and grade levels and leads teachers in school goals and practices. She is a key point person for school climate working with students as well as the Farmington Valley Health District and others on the Resilience Grows Here Program.

She's also involved in the New England Association of Schools and Colleges accreditation program.

"I love that kind of work ... I think it's just really interesting, intricate work to look at what are our systems and processes as a school what's going well, where can we improve?" Kidwell said.

And, as assistant principal, she's also ready to jump in wherever she might be needed and said it's great to work with principal Drew DiPippo.

"It's a very collaborative relationship," she said. "There are certain things that are designated but mostly it's us as a team working to move forward and find solutions."

Additionally, Kidwell continues to oversee the English Department, work on its curriculum and evaluate the teachers for the department.

As much as possible, she also stays involved in efforts such as Project Lit, a book club that she no longer leads but still reads and participates.

And it was certainly a love of books

that set a foundation for Kidwell.

"I was always reading whatever series I could get into," she said, adding that she loved mysteries, horrors, science fiction and classic literature.

Like many educators, she was also inspired by teachers, in her case especially the late Walter W. Caswell Jr., who taught English at Plainville High School for the past 34 years.

As she moved toward teaching, Kidwell further discovered that literature was actually one of the most effective ways to reach youth.

"It's just really easy to make those real-world connections between whatever's happening in some of the content of the books that kids are reading and what's happening in real-world adolescent lives. So that drew me into teaching English specifically. Some of the conversations that people on other content areas might shy away from because it's too deep, too real, we're like let's jump in and talk."

Kidwell received her Bachelor of Science in English Education in 2004, followed by a Master of arts in 2009 and a Doctor of Educational Leadership in 2015 – all at Central Connecticut State University.

Kidwell taught English at Berlin High School from 2004 to 2014 before coming to Canton, where she started as a high school English teacher. She's also taught English for Canton Academy



Dr. Ruth Kidwell

and, in addition to her department head and assistant principalship roles, has worked on numerous other initiatives such as those that involved curriculum alignment in the district, summer programs and the Anti-Defamation League's Names Can Really Hurt Us initiative.

Outside of work, Kidwell lives in Plainville with her husband Jason Wagner and loves spending time with nephews, friends and her dad.

One fact some might find surprising is she and her husband love pro wrestling.

"We follow all the WWE athletes and storylines, try to get out to events when they're in CT, and keep up on competing franchises," she said. ■

Public Universities growing in popularity

While choosing a college or other post high-school pathway is always a monumental decision, trends in higher education do change over time. In the Canton, the Class of 2019 made decisions that showcased a sizeable shift, but one that closely followed a national trend.

"The big trend that I've seen is that the decision of Canton students are starting to reflect some of the national trends we're seeing," said Deb Schwager, director of school counseling. "That's really a move toward financial fit becoming a primary driver in final decisions."

And the biggest winner in that scenario has been public universities, including those out of state that are attracting students with promises to meet the costs of in-state institutions.

Public in-state universities, however, were the top choice of Canton students in 2019. A year earlier that honor went to private out-of-state colleges and universities.

For example, out of a total 734

applications filled out by Canton students, 20 percent were to public in-state college, compared to 8 percent the previous year. Applications to out of state public universities remained at 27 percent, the same as the previous year. Eight percent of those were to private in-state colleges, also the same as the year before, and 45 percent were for private out-of-state colleges, down from 57 percent the previous year.

When it comes to matriculation, those public universities also fared well. Thirty eight percent of students enrolled at public in-state compared to 22 percent the previous year, 24 percent to public out-of-state as opposed to 18 percent in 2018, six percent to private in-state compared to 13 percent a year earlier and 32 percent to private out-of-state down from 47 percent in 2018.

It's all evidence that finances, along with major and location, remain major drivers.

Another trend in Canton is an increased interest in alternate pathways.

"Another big change that we're seeing statewide is that our community college system is really taking on the role, much more than in the past,

that our private for-profit technical institutions used to have in terms of career training. We now have Tunxis and Asnuntuck offering multiple certificates in year-to-a career programs in manufacturing, in technology, in allied health professions," she said.

In all, 80 percent of the Class of 2019 matriculated to a four-year college, 13 percent to a 2-year college, one percent to the military, 3 percent took a gap year and 3 percent direct employment.

Schwager and her team do their best to encourage those gap-year and direct-to-employment students to have a plan for some type of higher education or career training.

"We no longer live in a culture or society where a student with a high school degree and no other kind of training is really able to be financial independent or successful very easily. That's something that changed very significantly over the past several decades."

Canton High School is also continually looking at ways to educate its students on as many options as possible. Those include bringing in

outside speakers to collaborate with and building further career exploration activities into curriculum/collaboration with teachers/departments

Another area in which counselors are trying to help students prepare even more is in starting the process early.

One of the largest pieces of feedback in terms of college Schwager hears is that many students wish they had started the process earlier.

One tip for families to keep in mind is for families to start looking casually as early as sophomore year. She compares it to buying a car, when one often starts thinking about it and looking casually even though the moment of decision is a couple years off.

"It's never too early in your holiday traveling to drive through a campus on your way to grandma's - just driving through and looking, sort of like you're going to buy a car in a couple years. You're not ready. You're still saving for the car, but you can learn an awful lot just by looking at cars. ... That's the approach I would encourage families to take. Learn and understand what's out there. ■

The Year of Resilience

It's the Year of Resilience at the Canton Public Schools.

For the second year the district is working with Resilience Grows Here to expand its years-long focus on Social and Emotional Learning.

This year, students in grades 7 to 9 are participating in monthly workshops that address topics such as dealing with emotions, knowing how to ask for help, seeking out community support, being a compassionate and responsible citizen, and how to be empathetic versus sympathetic.

Resilience Grows Here, or RGH, is an initiative of the Farmington Valley Health District and made possible through various community partnerships. It started as an effort to help Veterans and members of the military in the East Granby area and expanded to that town's schools. Now for the second year, it is part of the Canton Public Schools.

As part of that effort, Alicia Newton, executive director Nourish My Soul and Justine Ginsberg, community health coordinator for the Farmington Valley Health District and director of Resilience Grows Here, facilitate monthly sessions for both students and staff.

"One of the goals of our school district is to ensure that our students are socially and emotionally aware," Superintendent Kevin Case said. "This is the fourth year we've been working with our staff on Emotional Intelligence and what that means for every adult working in our school district. And now we are in the second year of explicitly translating what that means for all of our students. The work we're doing through Justine and Alicia, through the Farmington Valley Health District, builds upon those goals, truly focusing on resilience strategies."

For Ginsberg, the best part of the program is that it is a long-term one, with common language, taught to both students and staff, with plans to expand training to the entire district, and parents.

"Superintendent Case has been such a champion of recognizing that children need more than just



[academics] to be successful human beings," she said. "If we don't graduate children that are emotionally literate, then all the wonderful SATs scores in the world aren't going to equip them for life."

Dr. Ruth Kidwell, assistant principal at Canton High School, said awareness, consistency and open dialogue are two important factors of the program, while principal Drew DiPippo added that it has helped the district be much more proactive in its approach to helping students navigate a complex world.

Ginsberg added that RGH is in the process of working to expand the program and train others to facilitate it and bring it to other schools.

The Canton schools is on the forefront of that movement and such a partnership allows a holistic approach, she added.

"We've got an ability to creatively manage not just the students' needs, but also the staff needs because they go hand in hand. If we're not supporting our staff, we're not supporting our students and I think that's part of the genius behind what Superintendent Case has helped to create," she said. "This is a system that doesn't just focus on one entity. In fact, we're talking about how to bring parents into that so that we're giving them the giving them with some of the skillsets that are going to support the work in the classrooms and that are going to support the staff." ■

Managing emotions

Happiness, fear, depression, anger and other emotions are part of being human but managing them is critical, particularly as students prepare for adulthood.

During a recent workshop at Canton High School, facilitators from Resilience Grows Here led the students through an exercise that identified various emotions, typical responses and ways to manage those.

Alicia Newton, executive director of Nourish My Soul and Justine Ginsberg, community health coordinator for the Farmington Valley Health District and director of Resilience Grows Here, led students in an exercise in managing emotions. One was anger. The group talked about recognizing the physical changes anger brings, such as burning ears or clenched fists, the typical reactions people might have and, finally, techniques to manage those feelings, rather than react physically or verbally.

"Before we even realize we're reacting to an emotion, we impulsively react. We make decisions without realizing it," Newton said. "And if we can start to recognize the feelings that show up, our physical responses, then you're better able to manage that emotion by taking a step back and doing whatever you have to do to manage it before you react."

One technique for dealing with anger came from a student, who suggested to, "stop and ask yourself how you're going to feel after I say or do this."

Ginsberg agreed, noting that in RGH's work with veterans and National Guard members, they often talk about waiting 90 seconds before reacting.

"Before you do anything you have to take 90 seconds, think about it and then make a decision. Is throwing the controller helpful? Is pushing someone helpful? Is yelling at the teacher helpful? Is slamming things down on the desk helpful?"

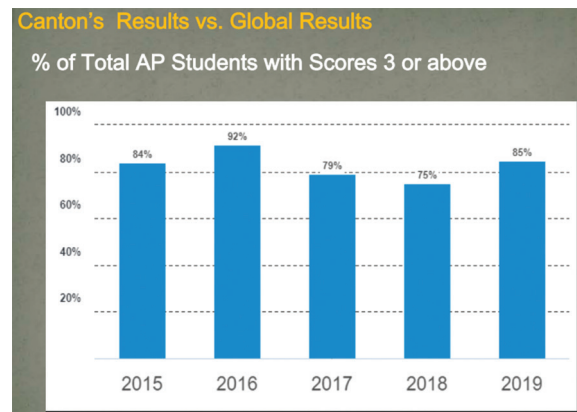
The group discussed some more techniques for dealing with anger before breaking into smaller groups for a similar exercise for various emotions. Each group then shared their findings with the entire class.

Ginsberg told the group that managing emotions is so important. The wrong reactions, she said, would only lead to more and more trouble as they get older, she said. The right tools, however, help one control their emotions, and allow one to help others.

"We have to be good self-managers and good at identifying when people around us are at risk so we can help them – to give them the tools they need so they can get through whatever's happening in their lives." ■

Student Achievement

District	ERW	Math	Total
Avon	584	590	1174
Simsbury	591	580	1171
Farmington	577	574	1151
Canton	567	558	1125
Granby	571	552	1123
RSD 10: Lewis S. Mills	554	527	1081



March 2019 Scores: DRG C



District	ELA	Math	Total
RSD 18: Lyme – Old Lyme	580	580	1160
Tolland	558	571	1129
RSD 19: E. O. Smith	556	572	1128
RSD 08: RHAM	565	571	1126
Canton	567	558	1125
RSD 07: Northwestern	551	562	1113
RSD 04: Valley Regional	559	522	1104
RSD 13: Durham / Coginchaug	564	536	1100

District	ELA	Math	Total
RSD 17: Haddam – Killingworth	555	544	1099
RSD 12: Shepaug	558	540	1098
RSD 10: Lewis S. Mills	554	527	1081
Suffield	553	526	1079
Somers	546	520	1066
Ellington	534	518	1052
Bolton	540	506	1046
RSD 14: Nonnewaug	527	503	1030

5 Year Summary

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Total AP Students	123	108 22%	172	143	151 31%
Number of Exams	212	220	269	232	*266
AP Students with Scores 3+	103	99	136	107	128
% of Canton AP Students with Scores 3 or above	83.7	91.7	79.1	74.8	84.8
% of State/CT with scores 3 or above		73/60	72/60	71/60	71/60

*20 Students "opted out" of AP test(s). (171 total AP students)
 *29 Tests were not taken (295 tests)
 For 2019-20, we have 264 "exams" to be taken based on current enrollment

NEW CERTIFIED STAFF 2019-2020



Mary McCart

Currently: Science Canton Middle School
 Previous – Science/STEM at City Hill Middle School, Naugatuck; STEM Long-Term Substitute, Westport Public Schools; Agriculture Teacher, Alexandria Central School, NY
 Bachelors – Agriculture & Natural Resources, UConn
 Masters- Curriculum & Instruction with concentration in Agricultural Education, UConn



Brookfield Public Schools 5th and 6th grade Band
 Bristol Public Schools 6-8 grade Band

Abe Ammary

Currently: CBPS and CIS: K-6 Math/ Science Coordinator and Elementary Department Chair
 Previous – CREC; Litchfield Public Schools, Principal; Simsbury Public Schools, NYC Public Schools
 Education: Sixth Year Degree – Educational Leadership – University of Connecticut, MS-Curriculum and Instruction-University of Scranton; BA-King's College



Katie Syrett

Currently: CIS Grade 4 Teacher
 Previous: long term substitute Latimer Lane Simsbury
 3rd grade teacher Dressel Elementary St. Louis, MO
 MA Curriculum and Instruction: University of Missouri, Columbia
 BA Elementary Education: University of Missouri, Columbia



Molly Henneberry

Currently: Kindergarten Teacher, Cherry Brook Primary School
 Previous Roles - First Grade Teacher, Edna C. Stevens Elementary School Cromwell, Connecticut (2015-2017)
 Kindergarten Teacher, Lamar Elementary School, New Braunfels, Texas (2017-2018)
 First Grade Teacher, Lamar Elementary School, New Braunfels, Texas (2018-2019)
 Degrees/Certifications: Elementary Education Degree from CCSU
 Connecticut: Teacher Certification (Kindergarten-6)
 Texas: Teacher Certification (Early Childhood-6)
 English as a Second Language



Stevie Juliano

Currently: .6 FTE Enrichment Specialist CIS & .4 FTE Technology Education Teacher CHS & CMS
 Masters- School Counseling, University of Saint Joseph
 Bachelors - Psychology-Mental Health, Southern Connecticut State University



Bailey Jeffko

Currently: Spanish - Canton Middle School
 Previous - Spanish Teacher at Irving A. Robbins Middle School - Farmington, CT
 Bachelors - Spanish & Secondary Education - Saint Michael's College



Jennifer Babcock

Currently: Literacy Innovation Specialist - CBPS
 Previous - 6th grade at Canton Intermediate School
 Bachelor of Arts in Psychology and Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education from Southern Connecticut State University
 Master of Arts in Education - University of Saint Joseph



Brandon Richard

Currently: CHS Technology Education
 Previous - Plainville High School Technology Education Teacher
 East Haven High School Technology Education Teacher
 Mechanic – Connecticut Mulch Distributors
 Bachelors – Technology Education – CCSU
 Masters – STEM Education – CCSU



Lisa LaDone

Currently: CMS Band
 Bachelor's degree in Saxophone performance from UCONN
 Teaching certification from CCSU
 Master's degree from NOVA Southeastern University in Teaching and learning
 East Hartford Public Schools K-6 general music
 Hartford Public Schools K-6 general music and band



Cecile Mancini

Currently: Canton High School mathematics
 Previous: Thomaston High School - Mathematics Teacher
 Avon Middle School - Mathematics Teacher



Olivia Stivala

Currently: CHS English
 Previous: Woodland Regional High School Substitute Teacher
 Bachelors – English Literature – Marist college
 Masters – Secondary English Education – UCONN

Canton Board of Education

The Canton Board of Education welcomed two new members this fall, each with relevant skillsets. Kim Sullivan and Nicholas Aligizakis take the places of Peg Berry and Helen Treacy, two long-time board members who chose not to seek re-election. Aligizakis' skills should help the district as it continually seeks to provide excellent education while being fiscally responsible.



Nicholas Aligizakis

A graduate of Northeastern University with a Bachelor's Degree in Finance and Insurance, Aligizakis is president of Collinsville Insurance and has more than 17 years of experience in insurance and finance.

"Public schools are where our future leaders, innovators, scientists, writers, artists and workforce are able to gain the necessary skills and tools they need to ensure their success," he wrote in a recent profile. "I am interested in preserving and improving the quality of the Canton School System. I hope to use my experience in budgeting, communication, and management to help guide the school district's development and success."

Aligizakis has lived in Canton with his wife Chelsy, since 2012. The couple has two boys, ages 3 and 5.

"We were drawn to Canton because of the reputation of excellence in their schools and the growing community," Aligizakis said.

Like Aligizakis, Sullivan and her husband Tim also have two young children, a son in first grade and a daughter in fourth grade.

Sullivan also has a wealth of experience in education, including 14 years as a kindergarten teacher. While she grew up mostly in Granby, Sullivan's family moved down south when she was a sophomore in high school and she obtained a degree in elementary education from the University of South Carolina. She taught inner city children in Charlotte, North Carolina then moved on to Clover, South Carolina before coming to work in Canton, her husband's hometown.

Along the way, she obtained a Master's Degree in Early Childhood at the University of Hartford.

Sullivan taught through 2010 when she had her first child, but she never lost touch with education and has volunteered as a room parent and in other roles in and out of the classroom. She's also served on the Canton Schools Early Childhood Task Force, as a girl scout troop co-leader, a youth soccer coach as a board president at Canton Community Nursery School, where she still teaches part time.

Sullivan has also greatly enjoyed staying in touch with her former students and their families. Among



Kim Sullivan

the parents she knew as a teacher were Berry and Treacy.

"Having been a former elementary school teacher and a current mother of two young children in the Canton School System, I am passionate about education. I want to ensure the best possible education for all students in Canton. Having been a Cherry Brook Primary School teacher and now a mother, I would bring a unique perspective on the education of young learners and their families to the Board of Education."

While she values her experience, Sullivan said she also knows education is changing rapidly and she knows how important it is to listen and to educate herself, since education is changing rapidly. One of her focuses is balancing technology with the social and emotional learning.

Sullivan loves staying connected to education and is thrilled to add the board to that.

"I'm looking forward to working with everybody on the board," she said. "I knew everybody pretty well and I respect everybody there." ■

Board of Education 2020 Meeting Dates

Jan. 14	May 12
Jan. 15 - Budget	May 26
Jan. 28	June 9
Feb. 11	Sept. 8
Feb. 25	Sept. 22
March 3	Oct. 13
March 24	Oct. 27
April 7	Nov. 10
April 21	Nov. 24
May 5 -Canton Celebrates	Dec. 8

**Meetings start at 7 p.m.
Check website for locations**

Key Budget Dates

January 15, 2020, 6 p.m.

BOE initial review of budget proposals

Tuesday, Feb. 11, 2020, 7 p.m.

BOE Meeting – Superintendent Presentation

Tuesday, Feb. 25, 2020, 7 p.m.

BOE Public Budget Hearing

Tuesday, March 3, 2020, 7 p.m.

BOE adopts budget

Monday, March 9, 2020

BOE Budget delivered to BOF

Monday, March 16, 2020, 6 p.m.

BOS present Budget to BOF

Wednesday, March 18, 2020, 6 p.m.

BOE presents Budget to BOF

Monday, March 23, 2020, 7 p.m.

BOF Public Hearing on Budget –

Monday, March 30, 2020, 7 p.m.

BOF Workshop

Monday, April 6, 2020

BOF recommended budget due to BOS and BOE

Monday, April 13, 2020

BOS and BOE revised budgets with itemized changes due back to BOF

Monday, April 20, 2020

Final budgets, itemized changes, etc. published to Town website

Monday, April 27, 2020, TBD

Annual Budget Hearing, BOF sends final recommended Budget to referendum.

Prior to May 14, 2020

Budget referendum (date set by BOS, no later than second Thursday in May)

Board of Education Members



www.cantonschools.org

Follow us on Facebook at Canton (CT) Public Schools and Twitter @cantontsuper on instagram

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