



Canton Public Schools

Opening Minds... Transforming Lives

Spring 2018



Photo by Alicia B. Smith

See Unified Sports, story on page 5

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

As you will read in this Spring edition of the Canton Public Schools' Newsletter, Opening Minds...Transforming Lives, the Canton Public Schools continue to be a Lighthouse District, where our students and staff shine brightly and a District to which other School Systems throughout Connecticut and the world look to in order to replicate our success.

Our District continues to be recognized for outstanding achievements in all areas of our academic, athletic, and arts programs. As you will read, we continue to expand opportunities for our students in the STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, Math) areas. Our students have demonstrated accomplishments in all of these areas. For the eighth consecutive year, our District was named as a Best Community for Music Education 2018. Ms. Kim Church, our Athletic Coordinator, was named the Outstanding New Athletic Administrator by the Connecticut Association of Athletic Directors. I am so very proud of these accomplishments and thank you, our community, for supporting our School District.

As you will read in this publication, our outstanding staff continues to work tirelessly to create a learning environment where each of our students is engaged and challenged in various educational experiences that in alignment with our mission, promoting each student's intellectual, physical, social, and emotional potential.

As a School District, we believe that:

- All students will successfully master Canton's Community Expectations for Learning
- All students benefit from high quality resources and experiences that foster intellectual, physical, social, and emotional growth
- All students flourish in a safe and healthy learning environment that values differences while respecting cultures, abilities and perspectives
- All children are entitled to a childhood

We value Collaboration, Kindness, and Integrity. With these values in mind, the staff and I look forward to our continued partnership, allowing us to provide students with opportunities to be creative and innovative. Please let your child's teacher, principal, or me know if there is anything we can do to improve your child's learning experience. Your feedback is important to us.



Kevin D. Case

from the board chair

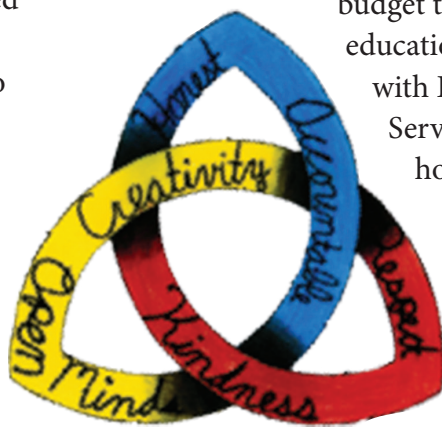
It is my pleasure to once again share with you the excellent work our students are doing here in the Canton Public Schools. As a school district, we continue to be focused on student-centered learning initiatives that allow our students to practice the skills of critical thinking, creativity, communication, collaboration and citizenship. The articles represented in this newsletter show examples of these skills at work both in and outside of the classroom. From Unified Sports teams, Robotics and STEM education to the CHS band's trip to Disney, our students experience learning that will prepare them for college, career and general life success when they leave the Canton Public Schools.

The Board of Education proposed budget of \$25,934,233.10 or 2.49% was by far the most difficult budget to develop given rising healthcare and special education costs. In this issue, you will find an interview with Dr. Perri Murdica, Director of Pupil Personnel Services, which gives us a better understanding of how our district services those students that have special needs.

Despite budget constraints, our schools continue to do great things and deliver the best possible education to Canton students. This is in large part due to the amazing administrative staff and teachers who give our students their very best. On behalf of The Board of Education, I want to thank you for your continued support of the Canton Public Schools, and I want to encourage you to attend the Town Hall meeting on May 14 to vote on the proposed budget. As always, I welcome any questions or comments as your feedback is important to us.



Julie Auseré



Outstanding New Athletic Administrator Award

Athletic Coordinator Kim Church, was recently honored by the Connecticut Association of Athletic Directors with the Patsy Lemley Kamercia "Outstanding New Athletic Administrator Award."

Student Centered Learning thrives in Canton

BY RACHEL NARDELLO, '18

Maya Angelou once said “Everyone grows old. But not everyone grows up.” Nestled in the quote are underlying themes of responsibility and independence. Although maturity comes with both age and experience, traditional schooling has often restricted students from gaining critical experiences necessary to becoming responsible and self-directed.

Walk into many schools across the country and you will likely find students listening to their teacher, given step-by-step instruction, all completing identical tasks. In contrast, teaching methods at Canton High School have been steadily changing by taking the classroom focus away from the teacher and turning it on each individual student.

I have seen these changes evolve throughout my past 13 years in the Canton Public School District. I have seen hope for more responsibility, maturity, and creativity. Student-centered learning provides opportunities for all kinds of students. From the student who doesn't fit a cookie cutter mold and has struggled to succeed in a more traditional classroom, to the student who does fit that mold, but longs to explore their interests in independent study, this educational shift has been beneficial.

Specifically, I have seen these gifts of independence and responsibility given to students in multiple courses at Canton. Journalism, an English elective choice for seniors at Canton High, is one of the classes in which student-centered learning directs the class and gives students an opportunity to grow and explore. Often in class, students are able to write articles at their own pace, on their own topic of interest, and leave the classroom to collect data – all directed by the needs of their articles as they have

determined them.

These privileges allow students to connect to their work, and find interest within their assignments. If students show a certain curiosity and enthusiasm towards a subject, they are going to put hard work and dedication into everything they do. Not only that, but the ability for students to create their learning process independently fosters a feeling of trust and respect between the teacher and student, which is not often the case in many high schools.

Student centered learning can also be seen in art courses. Jewelry I and Jewelry II are popular classes that I have had the privilege of taking. Projects are given with broadly set rules and much room for creativity. All students are able to follow the directions provided, even with completely different design ideas. Students work at all different paces, without comparison to nearby students' work progress. This individualized method of learning provides each student with the ability to explore and test different interests while still meeting the standards of a course.

Taylor James, a Canton High senior, had the opportunity to complete an independent study on Fashion in History. Taylor said she “liked it better designing my own assignments because I could focus more on something I'm interested in, which motivated me to do more in depth work.” She was able to report to a teacher every day with progress and her plans for the rest of the project. From this, Taylor was able to pursue research on a topic of her interest, with the direction of a teacher, but by creating her own plans. Being given so much latitude in terms of her process allowed Taylor to demonstrate strong responsibility and capability to map out her own assignments and complete them on time.

Student centered learning is also evident in many

Advanced Placement (AP) classes at Canton High School. Senior Tim Biondo explained how in AP English Language, each student developed their own unique question at the beginning of the year, and applied it to each book they read throughout class. Essays were easier to write, and they were engaging for students

as well. Julia Tarinelli, also a senior, took AP Physics, where labs are created by particular groups, and students are able to experiment with different methods to eventually all get the same answer.

Student centered learning is an effective and practical step towards improving the future success of high school students. Allowing students to make independent decisions about how to approach a task or project with the expectation of them completing work may feel uneasy for some, but it ultimately supports student collaboration and competency based learning.

Although teacher centered learning has worked in the past and students have been able to succeed to the highest standards when taught this way, time has come for an even more effective approach. Seymour Papert, an MIT professor claims, “when you go to school, the trauma is that you must stop learning and you must now accept being taught.” Student-centered learning allows both educators and students to collaborate in this process of teaching and learning, making it a more meaningful experience for everyone.



Rachel Nardello

District has a new Finance Director

Phillip Penn arrived in Canton just in time for budget season. No problem. The seasoned financial director is ready to crunch those numbers.

“These days I feel like I am drinking from a fire hose,” Mr. Penn joked, as ironing out the Town and Board of Education budgets can be a challenge.

Mr. Penn joined the Town of Canton staff as the finance director earlier this year and works jointly with the two entities, the town and school board.

From the Board of Education side of things Mr. Penn said he is responsible for all the non-academic components of running a school district. This includes paying school related bills, payroll, facilities, transportation, school cafeterias and any school facility that is rented out to the public.

“A big part of what I've done professionally is to make it run as efficiently as we can make it,” Mr. Penn said.

Before joining the Town of Canton Mr. Penn served as the Business Manager for the Plymouth Public Schools.

In Plymouth the schools had a similar number to those in Canton, about 1,500 students and consisted of four schools.

A graduate of Cornell University, Mr. Penn went straight to Wall Street working as a money manager. He went on to work in other financial capacities including as CFO of Claims for The Hartford and had positions in financial planning and analysis.

“I was always good with numbers at school,” Mr. Penn said. “I saw it as a way to parlay that knowledge into a career.”

Having a finance director oversee both the Town and Board of Education is increasingly becoming more common, Mr. Penn said.

He said Canton is a strong town financially.

“I see Canton being proactive in how they deal with liabilities and having a multi-year plan,” Mr. Penn said.

“It's a great community,” he added.

Mr. Penn lives in neighboring Burlington and is already enjoying the four-mile ride to and from work. He is also finding his way around Town Hall.

“There are some quirky things about this building,” he said, noting the staircases that lead to nowhere.

Not to be deterred, Mr. Penn said he is learning as much as he can about how Canton operates to ensure “operations hum along.”



Phillip Penn, new Finance Director

And the decision is?

Reconnecting with the members of the Class of 2018

No doubt many seniors have a big red circle on their calendar marking graduation — June 22. The anticipation is likely made worse with the seemingly never-ending winter weather. However, the days shall pass, probably much more quickly than seniors can imagine, and soon their high school education will come to an end.

From there it will be on to the next chapter.

In the fall four seniors spoke about their experiences applying to college, where they hope to be accepted or attend and what it felt like to be wrapping up their education in Canton. These seniors sat down once again to share some news.

Ellie Galligan was considering Providence College as well as Amherst College. She had made several visits to campus to see the schools for herself. One such trek caught her by surprise. She did not think she would like the campus as much as she did, an event that prompted her to advise juniors to visit schools of interest. In the end this school felt comfortable and once she received her letter of acceptance she knew what her answer would be.

In the fall Ellie will be attending Fairfield University.

“When I first visited I loved the campus,” she said, adding that the

smaller enrollment and size and location of the campus appealed to her.

“It had what I wanted,” she said.

She plans on pursuing a degree in Human Relations.

“It’s very nice to be done with everything,” Ellie admitted referring to the rigorous process of applying to college.

In the fall Jacob Benedetti was considering attending school out of the country, in Montreal. Once he was accepted into the Engineering program at the University of Connecticut, however, he decided to stay closer to home.

“I like the campus, my brother went there, the sports,” he said as to some of the appeal for him for the state university.

“Once I got into the engineering program I knew right away,” Jacob said.

The University of Hartford Hart School was among the top schools Alexander Simmons was considering. He was accepted there. What has changed, however, is what he will be studying. He had intended to study Music Theater.

A compliment at his UHA audition, however, made him rethink that. He was encouraged to apply as an acting major.

He decided to do just that after being told by one of the college recruiters how after sitting in on 500 auditions his really stood out.

“I knew I would go there at that point,” Alexander said.

While he has a lengthy resumé detailing all the work he has done in musicals, Alexander said he has only been in one play.

“I will just focus on that,” he said of acting. “I will get out of my comfort zone.”

Linnea Fiedler has hopes of becoming an illustrator one day and is planning to study art. She had applied to several art schools including the Massachusetts College of Art and Design, the Rhode Island School of Design and Cooper Union School of Art and the School of Visual Arts. She applied to one more, the Maryland Institute College of Art, and that is where she will be attending in the fall.

“Something that really appealed to me about this school was that the faculty there clearly wanted the students to get a good career after college, which I didn’t see as much of in the other art schools I visited, they were mainly about opportunities while still at school,” Linnea said. “The students also seemed very talented and I really liked Baltimore when I visited and the other students I met while there, there was a really pleasant but still driven and hardworking atmosphere.”

Linnea said the thing she will miss about Canton High School are the friends she made and the amount of nature she lives amongst when she moves to a city.



Ellie Galligan



Linnea Fiedler



Jacob Benedetti



Alexander Simmons



1.



2.



3.



4.

1. Cherry Brook presents ICER

115 students in grades 2 and 3 presented their ICER projects to the Cherry Brook Primary School Community. ICER is a child-centered STEM celebration for students.

2. International outreach at Canton Intermediate School

Sixth grade students at Canton Intermediate School shared independent research projects with international students during a trip to the University of Hartford this past March. Earlier in the fall the international students visited CIS to share about cultures from around the world. The school visits and independent research project is part of an ongoing partnership between CIS and the University of Hartford.

3. Penny war is a big win for Canton Middle School

The Canton Middle School community raised an astonishing \$1,188.35 during the week-long penny war to fight cancer! Our middle school teams battled it out with incentives such as hat day and Music for A Mission. The competition heated up during the week as students teamed up to knock the staff out of first place. All proceeds go to the Leukemia and Lymphoma society.

4. CHATs help goes international at Canton High School

At Canton High School Mrs. Smith’s CHAT group, as part of this “Compassionate Community” project decided that they wanted to do something for the people of Costa Rica, and then also deliver the items when some students of World Language visited there in February. Hence, they reached out to the Costa Rican Maleku community and asked what we could offer to them. The Maleku community representative indicated that they were in need of school supplies and soccer jerseys. The CHAT students spent several periods deciding what we wanted to put on the jerseys, and decided on the phrase “Que viva la amistad entre nuestros países y nuestras comunidades!” In English, this means “Long live the friendship between our countries and our communities.” In addition, we put the Costa Rican flag as well as the American flag on the back of the jerseys to signify the peace, unity, and friendship between our communities.

Unified Sports: Bringing Everyone Together

“One! Two! Three! Unified!” That was the cheer given as the Unified Sports team at Canton High School wrapped up a solid session of basketball action. Minutes later students were grabbing their backpacks and heading home. Before any of this, however, the gymnasium at Canton High School echoed with the sound of “thump, thump, thump,” as basketballs were dribbled, shots taken and high fives doled out to the successors.

Unified Sports is an outreach program of the Special Olympics Connecticut focused on school-aged athletes. It is defined by Special Olympics and the Connecticut Interscholastic Athletic Conference as a way to create events to “bring special education and regular education students together on the same playing field, using the athletic arena as a forum to help break barriers on a grassroots level and to mainstream students with mental disabilities.” The program partners those students with special needs (athletes) with mainstream students (partners), who meet regularly for sporting events.

Unified Sports has been a part of Canton schools for 14 years. During the winter, high school students of all abilities get together once a week to enjoy some fun and sports, and in the spring, students at Cherry Brook Primary School enjoy the Unified spirit, by also meeting once a week.

“Being kids, at this age they just want to have fun,” said Steve O’Meara, physical education teacher at CBPS. He has been at the school for nine years, and was at the high school prior to that. He said he knew he wanted to start a Unified program at the elementary level.

“It’s a great program,” he said. “I think this is the most important team I coach. This one is so rewarding and unique.”

“Unified Sports, if nothing else existed, that would be it for me,” Mr. O’Meara continued. “It’s so near and dear to my heart.”

There have been as many as 30 kids who participate each session at CBPS and they engage in running events, drills and playing games.

Students are often teamed up as a partner or an athlete.

“I think the most important thing is they have fun,” he said.

An added bonus is outside of the weekly gatherings, students get to know one another and often say “hi” when they see one another in the hallway.

“Everybody has abilities, tapping into those is really important,” Mr. O’Meara said.

CBPS students enjoy Unified Sports Day, an event in which teams throughout the state gather at Conard High School in West Hartford. Participants enjoy games of basketball, volleyball, track,

soccer and baseball, and they get to meet other teams.

The program has been up and running for about nine years at Canton Intermediate School.

This year there has been a small number of practices at CIS in preparation for the May event.

This enables participants to focus on specific skills, Scott LaRock said, Unified Sports coach.

“So far we have practiced baseball skills such as hitting and running the bases in proper order. We have also practiced volleying skills, soccer kicking skills, basketball passing, dribbling and shooting and a running long jump,” he said. This year there are 15 students participating at CIS.

“I hope the students learn to really appreciate each other for who they are and how each person is somebody who can be successful and fun to be around,” Mr. LaRock said. “Unfortunately students sometimes get caught up with trying to be somebody they aren’t because they might feel that helps them fit in better with a group. Our Unified Sports team is one big team and the students who participate inherently know that the best way to treat each other is with respect.”

At Canton High School para educator Brian Gottier is in charge of the Unified Team. In the fall they offer soccer and in the winter the team switches to basketball.

His unified teams have participated in tournaments: a soccer event at Avon Old Farms School for the middle school team and a tournament at Bristol Central School in October, for the high school team.

“I think the beauty of this program, is it helps students with participating in various activities as well a socializing and building relationships with their peers,” Mr. Gottier said. “It helps with their self esteem and confidence that will help them in the future.”

An important thing he’s noticed is how great the partner, or volunteers, are when they work with their peers.

“One of the things I enjoy seeing the most, I am in the high school, and see students walking to and from class, I like to see the students walking together. Everyone seems to be enjoying one another.”

During each practice Mr. Gottier, -Mr. G as he is known - stresses three things for all participants to keep in mind: respect, sportsmanship and team unity.

His team consists of students with a wide range of abilities, from those with Down syndrome, others on the Autism spectrum and some with behavioral issues.

When it comes time to enjoy a sports activity, however, the goal is to have fun.

In addition to getting to know one another at the school, Mr. Gottier said, the team also has events with other

Unified Teams from other school districts, he said. The Canton Unified program, he said, has developed a good rapport with the team in Avon and has also met a team from Torrington.

The team also enjoys non-sports activities and the occasional field trip. Mr. Gottier is planning an outing to a Hartford Yard Goats game.

The baseball game will be just one of many non-sports activities that have been planned for the Unified Team, who have also enjoyed bowling, mini-golf, go carts and holiday parties. These events continue where the sports activities left off, by allowing teammates to socialize.

Last year the team played a game against the Simsbury Unified Team during halftime of the girl’s basketball team at Mohegan Sun Casino.

The team played in front of a crowd of more than 5,000 people and Mr. Gottier is sure it will be a memory his team will have for years to come.

“I came out here and play for fun,” eighth grader Andrew Derkovitz said as to why he enjoys being a part of the Unified team. He plays basketball, tennis and volleyball for CMS.

Matthew Kulik, a freshman at CHS, first became involved in Unified Sports when he was in second grade.

“I like helping other kids who maybe don’t get the opportunities of others, it’s a little bit of team building and bonding,” he said.

Twins Halle and Lauren Gerhold are members of the CHS team.

Halle said she was encouraged to get involved by a friend and her sister.

“I feel like in this program everyone



is equal,” Halle said. “You get to be with people you are not normally with. It’s a good learning experience.”

“It’s not about winning,” Lauren added. “It’s about everyone participating. You get to make new friends.”

Taylor Capiga, another freshman, said she joined, in part, because she had a friend who was physically disabled.



Next Generation Science Standards focuses on student inquiry

“I think it’s a predator,” announced Helen while she looked at an image of a skull. “I’m looking at the eyes to see if they go sideways or forward.”

“The eyes are bigger, which usually means it has to have wider vision to see if a predator is coming,” commented Sam on the skull image in front of him.

The two third graders studied the images further.

“It may live in the woods,” Helen said. “To protect itself.”

Sam’s skull image inspired him to think the creature might live in a field, as the teeth indicated the animal was a plant eater.

It turns out one of the images was that of a skull belonging to a wombat, native to Australia and the other was of an orangutan.

The students were demonstrating their observation skills based on the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) that have been put into place in Canton schools.

“The kids need to do a lot of thinking. We present kids with phenomena, not a lot of information, they have to go and find it,” Lisa Deltano, K-6 math/science coordinator said.

“It’s putting the emphasis on the kids, they are engaged in what they are doing,” Ms. Deltano said.

The Next Generation of Science Standards evolves around what experts refer to as 3D learning or “the thoughtful and deliberate integration of three distinct dimensions: scientific and engineering practices, disciplinary core ideas and crosscutting concepts.”

“It’s a big shift in the way we think and work,” STEM Coordinator Jon Bishop said.

The NGSS does not change the content of what students learn but rather focuses on the how material is presented.

“It’s much more student driven

than teacher driven” Ms. Deltano said.

There will be more:

- Systems thinking and modeling to explain phenomena and to give a context for the ideas to be learned
- Students conducting investigations, solving problems, and engaging in discussions with teacher guidance
- Students discussing open-ended questions that focus on the strength of the evidence used to generate claims
- Students reading multiple sources and developing summaries of information
- Student writing of journals, reports, posters, and media presentations that offer explanations and arguments
- Provision of supports so that all students can engage in sophisticated science and engineering practices

The new standard will lesson the focus on teachers asking students questions with only one answer, worksheets, or over simple activities.

Canton is ahead of the state timeline established to implement NGSS, which the state intended to gradually introduce beginning in the 2017-18 school year for grades 3, 6 and 9, and adding the other grades through the 2019-2020 school year.

The district science committee has been meeting beginning in 2014, and shortly after the standards were implemented in kindergarten and grades 3, 6 and 9. A new science curriculum was written for grades 1, 2, 4, 6 and 7 with the assistance of the Capitol Region Education Council. Teachers in the district contributed to writing the new standards and new science units have been written for grades 5 and 8 as well as for high school chemistry.

Already 19 states have adopted the new standards and 35 percent of students are using NGSS, Marsha Jorgensen, 7-12 Department Chair said.

Last year the district hosted a NGSS Boot Camp 1.0 for grades 4-12 and later in the spring for grades



Photo by Alicia B. Smith



kindergarten through 3. This February the Boot Camp 2.0 took place.

In addition to students adjusting to a new way to learn science material, teachers had to shift how they presented material.

“In the beginning it’s overwhelming to consider all the shifts,” Mr. Bishop said. “Everything we’ve gotten from our Boot Camps has been very positive.”

The district has also done an assessment on what science related materials they have to use. In some instances materials were reallocated to different grade levels.

In addition the time for science lessons has been extended.

Madeline, a kindergartner, has had an interesting year in science. Her class investigated what types of conditions and environments plants needed to thrive.

“We put them in a dark spot, a sort of dark spot and a light spot,” Madeline said of the plants in her classroom.

The students were then asked to record what happened to each plant.

From there students then began to investigate what would be necessary for different types of pets.

Another unit Madeline’s class studied was about the weather. They began the lesson with reading a book.

“I like the weather because I like how the seasons change,” Madeline said.

The class kept weather journals writing down what they observed, what would be appropriate clothes to wear with the types of conditions.

“It’s a challenge but our kids love it,” Mr. Bishop said as the NGSS have been implemented. “Their response has been phenomenal.”

On the road to live and learn

Morgan Vacca, a junior at Canton High School, woke up early one morning, and boarded a boat on to her next adventure. She saw a sloth. It moved. It was an unusual sight considering sloths are known to move so slowly the movement may not be noticeable.

Crocodiles and an assortment of birds were also visible.

Morgan was visiting Costa Rica when all these wonderful and wild sights were seen. She was part of an annual trip hosted by the World Language Department.

"I love living in Canton but being able to experience another place, I don't even know what to call it," Morgan said. "It let me get out of my comfort zone. I was so lucky to experience it."

Morgan was among 20 students from CHS who traveled to the Central American country. The group brought along a donation of school supplies and soccer jerseys to give to students there and they had the opportunity to explore some sights all while practicing their Spanish.

"When giving school supplies to the children you could see their faces light up," fellow traveler junior Michael



Courtesy photo

Cavanaugh said.

"It was an experience I'll never forget," Michael said.

For years the foreign language department has been hosting trips, typically to Spain and Costa Rica as a cultural immersion program.

Among the things Morgan said she learned from the trip was "to slow down and appreciate life."

"Being from America everyone is on to the next thing. The people there were very present. It's what I strive to be as a high school student, take a second to appreciate what I have now."

Mike added that he came away with the lesson to not take anything for granted.

"I'll go home and have a bunch of

stuff. Down there they cherish everything they have," he said, adding that he learned to look at life in a new perspective.

Junior Diego Noriega also traveled with the group. He recalled meeting workers at the zip line park where the students spent time and they left quite an impression on him.

"The guys working there were so happy," Diego said. "I don't see that a lot here. We have to appreciate what we have. That was the best week of my life probably for a long time."

In 2019 the world language department will host a trip to Spain in February. This will be an eight-day excursion where students and their chaperones visit Sevilla, Cordoba, Madrid, Toledo and Segovia. Among the sights they will visit include the

Tower of Gold, Plaza de España, a tour of the Great Mosque in Cordoba, the Plaza de Cibeles and the Puerta del Sol in Madrid and the Church of Santo Tome in Toledo.

"All of these places the students will learn history," Spanish teacher Tara Smith said. "We will travel south to north, see the difference in the influence of Northern Africa, as we travel north it will be more European, Catholic, more Roman. We'll get a very broad picture of Spain."

With past adventures to Spain Ms. Smith said the tour has included a stop in Grenada. For this next trip she made the decision to not visit here as she felt the last visit felt rushed and because of the timing of the trip students will miss out on the beautiful gardens.

"You don't have such an appreciation for another country until you live and breathe it," Canton High School Principal Drew DiPippo said. He traveled to Spain with students two years ago. "There is so much to learn and live."

Mr. DiPippo added that he appreciated the support from the Board of Education on these international school trips and expressed gratitude for the teachers who plan them.

The principal said he traveled with 19 students and quickly learned to count from one to 19 in Spanish.

On the field

“With this weather that we have recently had, most of our teams are just starting to play their games/meets/matches,” Athletic Coordinator Kim Church said.

"It is hard to tell how any of our teams are progressing in their season as we head towards the state and conference tournaments. Max Sparks should do well with his distance events that he is running for our boy's outdoor track team. Our girls lacrosse team is off to an undefeated start."

With that being said, Ms. Church was able to share details on the winter season, which she did at a meeting in March.

The Boys Basketball ended the season with a 20-5 record. The team lost in Division V semi-finals and lost in the NCCC semi-finals. Luke Brown

and Ryan Enns were named All-NCCC.

In Girls Basketball, the team finished with an 18-6 record and lost in the Class S first round as well as in the NCCC finals. All-NCCC players were Abby Charron, Lauren Eschenbrenner and Belle Magna.

The Boys Indoor Track team had a 10-2 record and finished 6th in the Class S championships and finished 3rd in the NCCC championship. All-NCCC players include Peter Fuller, Aidan O'Donnell and Max Sparks. All-State athletes include Max Sparks and Peter Fuller.

Girls Indoor Track had a 13-0 season. They finished 8th in the Class S championships and won the NCCC championship. All-NCCC players include Maddie Archangelo, Julia Caputo, Jane Frawley, Chelsea Mitchell and Helena Winkler, with Julia Caputo being named to All-State.

The wrestling season wrapped up their season with a 12-8 record and finished 14th in the Class S championships. Teammates Braydon Fluckiger and Matt Webb were named All-NCCC.

At the meeting, Ms. Church said Max Sparks and Julia Caputo both qualified for the New England Indoor Track Championships. Max Sparks beat a school record in the 1600 meters with a time of 4:24:55, as well as in the 3200 meters with a time of 9:31.5. Peter Fuller broke the high jump record with a height of 6'2". Another record was broken with the Distance Medley Relay team consisting of Aidan O'Donnell, Mike Cavanaugh, Andy Obrzut and Max Sparks. The team won with a time of 11:09.77.

Other records that were broken include Chelsea Mitchell in the 55 meters with a time of 7.46 seconds and the long jump with a jump of 16'11.5". Jane

Frawley had the distinction of breaking the school record in the 1600 meters with a time of 5:30.8. Julia Caputo broke the record in the 3200 meters with a time of 11:23.38. The school record high jump went down as Maddie Archangelo cleared 5'0". Another Distance Medley Relay team, consisting of Julia Caputo, Chelsea Mitchell, Helena Winkler and Jane Frawley, broke a school record with a time of 13:25.53.

Ms. Church said too that the Wrestling team, Girls Indoor Track and Boys Basketball all won the conference for the second straight year in a row.

Between practices and games the athletic department still found time for a community service project, raising \$239 for Project Purple, a substance abuse awareness program. Teams sold t-shirts and bracelets. This spring the teams collected non-perishable food items for the Canton Food Bank.

CHS prepares for new schedule beginning next year

Three years after adopting an eight block period at Canton High School, which enabled classes to meet every day for 48 minutes and designated time for a lunch period, the district is once again adopting a new schedule as needs have changed.

“Instructionally we are in a different place,” CHS Principal Drew DiPippo said at the March 20 Board of Education meeting.

Beginning with the next school year CHS students will have a schedule in which all eight periods will be filled, consisting of 44 minutes of class time and two lunch waves three days a week. For the remaining two days, Wednesdays and Thursdays, the schedule will consist of four classes, each 88 minutes long. The time between classes will be cut from four minutes to three.

The longer periods on odd and even days will enable teachers to spend more time focusing on concepts, allow time for more research, longer discussions and provide more time for labs and other activities. In addition, the new schedule will assist students in meeting their graduation requirements, which currently requires 6.0 credits per year. The Class of 2019 will be the first to complete 6.5 credits for at least two years, enabling them to meet the increased 25 credits in order to graduate.

The high school is also beginning a Capstone requirement for seniors and the extended class time will benefit students completing their required projects.

For the 2015-2016 school year when the eight block day was begun, DiPippo explained this change enabled time in the day for one more period, a designated lunch

time for all students and more time for collaboration among staff.

“There was some success here,” Mr. DiPippo said, adding that the lunch periods were a positive for students and enabled them to take more subjects of interest and have time for remedial instruction.

“In the meantime some things have changed and this is what brings us to today,” DiPippo said.

Among those changes are requirements for graduation such as taking four years of math, two years of a world language, the new Capstone requirement, more electives being offered and new courses being implemented.

“It became real evident to add a period in the day,” Mr. DiPippo said.

A task force consisting of teachers at CHS was convened to review the schedule and to make suggestions. The district also reached out to both Simsbury High School and

Granby Memorial High School to learn how these districts adopted a similar schedule.

As for teachers, Mr. DiPippo said the new schedule would offer them more time for professional time and the contractual 30-minute lunch.

“The needs are prevailing where we have to make the shift,” Mr. DiPippo said. “The humanities are overjoyed, they can stretch these skills with more time,” the principal continued.

“I think the AP teachers are going to be excited about this,” Board of Education member Helen Treacy said.

“I think it’s a really interesting approach,” added fellow board member Joe Scheideler.

The principal believed the new changes would quickly become normal for students after two or three weeks.

“It’s a natural progression,” Mr. DiPippo said.

First time trip to Disney brings success

While it was impossible for members of the Canton High School symphonic band to bring back the warmth and sun from Florida, they did come home with a trophy for placing second at Festival Disney.

In what can be described as a working vacation of sorts, 88 band members along with a group of administrators, parents and teachers left the dank Connecticut weather and headed for sunny Florida for part of the spring break.

From April 12 to 16 the band and its entourage enjoyed the Disney parks while also taking part in a competition that brings together school bands from across the country to perform and compete.

“It really was great,” music

department chair John Mastroianni said of the trip.

“The band did terrific in the festival,” he said.

This was the first trip to Disney for Canton musicians although Mr. Mastroianni has taken students in the past.

The band sent in an audition tape and was invited down to participate.

Students had time to enjoy the parks with their passes.

Saturday April 14 was the big day. The group met to eat breakfast together before the competition. They also enjoyed a session with adjudicator, Dr. Johnny Vinson, retired from the University of Auburn. That evening they attended the award ceremony where they received a second place prize.

“It was a national competition with bands from all over the country. It made us really happy,”

Mr. Mastroianni said. “I am not surprised at anything these kids do; they are awesome. They rise above, always.”

The band performed three numbers, including “Unleashed” by Jerod Spears, “Solas Ane,” a Gaelic piece by Samuel Hazo and “They Shall Run and be Free” by Brant Karrick.

“The judges all commented on what an incredibly challenging program we had,” he said. “That makes me happy as well. I consider that an important part of my job, that my students are challenged. It’s really nice to hear that.”

While this was the first trip to Disney for CHS band members, it will not be the last. Mr. Mastroianni intends on planning more such trips, spacing them out enough so that each student in the band will have at least one opportunity to play in the festival.



A closer look at special education

For families with a child with special needs school days may seem overwhelming. However, through special education, a comprehensive team of educators are readily available to answer questions and ensure each child receives the appropriate services and assistance in the district needed to flourish. To that end, Dr. Perri Murdica, Director of Pupil Personnel Services, shared that in each school building there is a team of educators including special education teachers, school psychologists, social workers, speech-language pathologists, occupational and physical therapists to support students.

Dr. Murdica said that students with special needs first enter our school district through our Preschool program “That is a parent’s very first interaction with the public school system so it is really very important to establish communication that enables a parents understanding that they may come to us and ask us anything,” she said. “There are many things that, as a parent, can make the process seem overwhelming. I do think, in Canton, we work very hard to help break down that process so the family feels that they are an integral and included part of their child’s education.”

Students with special needs are protected by state and federal regulations to ensure that they have access to a free and appropriate public education.

“What that boils down to in the school district is that the supports and services that students receive are required under those regulations and will include specially-designed instruction, which is the hallmark of special education,” Dr. Murdica said. “Specially designed instruction can include speech-language therapy, occupational therapy, counseling, physical therapy, and nursing support. It can include anything the student

requires in order for them to have access and make progress in the general curriculum.”

There are also state mandates that guide school districts, including those for specific disabilities, such as dyslexia, that can impact the types of professional development educators are required to receive in order to support their students. “Everything that effects the general population also ultimately effects the special education population such as attendance and mental health. There are always new things added to the legislation that affect education but there are certain things that will affect program requirements. Regulations around special education have been in place for so long that it’s really just a matter of refining or adding requirements. These additions that are sometimes challenging to implement,” Dr. Murdica said.

Like all school districts, Canton also works with a number of state agencies. “We try to work with state agencies, when appropriate, to help support our students. Services that agencies previously provided may be discontinued or curtailed so the local school districts could be asked to do more,” Dr. Murdica said. “So what has happened is when the state is in a budgetary crisis they’re removing a lot of supports that families have received in the past through agencies like the Department of Developmental Services (DDS), the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS) and the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS) and other agencies,” she said.

The reduction in state funds can be a challenge to local school districts.

“The challenge is in making sure that we educate every student with a free and appropriate public education, engage families, and work within the mandates, despite budget challenges. It’s definitely a little bit of a challenge

but it’s the right and legally required thing to do,” Dr. Murdica said. “The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), which really is the legislative basis for everything, was put in place for a very good reason. Our state regulations are important as well, and, in some cases, CT regulations around special education require a higher standard than the federal regulations.”

Additional costs may be incurred when a student’s needs require an education outside of Canton Public Schools. In these cases, the student receives their education in a private approved special education school.

“They are typically students with more complex needs and a decision is made at a Planning and Placement Team (PPT) meeting, which includes parents and educators, to design a program for them to receive their free and appropriate public education in a private approved school setting, referred to as an outplacement,” Dr. Murdica explained. In these cases, Canton Public Schools, specifically the Pupil Personnel Services Department continue to oversee their special education services.

As part of the Open Choice program in Connecticut, parents have the option to send their child to a Magnet, Charter, or VoAg school. If a student from Canton attends one of these schools and receives special education, Canton Public Schools is responsible for overseeing their special education services as well.

As Dr. Murdica and the Board of Education began to plan the budget there are both internal and external factors that are taken into consideration.

“We look at the staffing for all students to be supported in the district appropriately,” Dr. Murdica said. “Within the district we plan for the costs for any outside consultant that may be needed because we may not have



that area of expertise.”

Developing a budget includes estimating what funds will be necessary for the following year. During the process, consideration is given to what portion of the budget the district has some control over versus what it cannot control, such as any unknown mandates or student enrollment changes.

“The budget process, as you know, starts very early, usually by the beginning of the calendar year. By the time the budget is finalized it has typically changed from the initial projections. There are variables, such as what happens over the summer with new students moving in or out, affecting our original budget planning, but we do the best we can with what we know. It is a team process, where we all work together,” Dr. Murdica said.

Musical Notes

While the springtime trip to a competition at Disney in Florida was a large part of the musical year, there was more going on in the music department.

For starters, the CHS Jazz Band performed at the University of Massachusetts Jazz Festival, coming

away with a first place prize. The win enabled the group to be the opening act for saxophonist Chris Potter.

“That was our present so to speak,” music director John Mastroianni said.

In addition, senior Rowan Cookman was selected as an outstanding musician and received a scholarship to the UMass Jazz in July summer program.

The good news continued when

Canton Public Schools were once again recognized as one of the Best Communities for Music Education by the National Association for Music Merchants.

“We have gotten it every year since 2011,” Mr. Mastroianni said. “It’s no easy feat.”

Musicians are now gearing up for end-of-the-year concerts.

The vocal concert will be held on May 9 at 7:30 p.m. The band is preparing to march in the annual Memorial Day Parade.

“We are never lacking for things to do,” Mr. Mastroianni said.

While his students continue to rack up awards, Mr. Mastroianni himself has been nominated for a music educator Emmy.

Doing the hustle and coding too

Some of their parents may even be too young to remember The Hustle from the glory days of disco, but Jon Bishop is spearheading a revival of sorts.

For the eighth graders at Canton Middle School in the robotics class their introduction to this dance comes in the form of a robot, which they have programmed to dance.

The effort to get the robot to move in a rhythmic fashion is one way Mr. Bishop has grown his eighth-grade robotics class. Rather than stick to specific activities outlined in his teaching materials, he has worked to broaden what the students do to further help develop their skills, and apparently their dance moves just for fun.

“They think it’s funny,” he said of his students.

The robotics class at the middle school is one way the district has broadened their STEM curriculum. Across all grade levels students are learning the fundamentals of coding, which also brings with it a wide breadth of skills and learning in other areas too.

Beginning in second grade students are exposed to robotics through the LEGO WeDo program where they learn basic engineering and robotics.

Mr. Bishop said the program teaches students problem solving skills and logical reasoning.

“It’s helping kids, no matter their background, that it’s something they can do,” Mr. Bishop said.

“By starting so young we can humanize this kind of thinking with kids,” he said. “It’s just something you can do and have done.”

This past fall more than 50 students at Canton Intermediate School participated in the Lego FIRST League. They were divided into seven teams and each designed and programmed a robot to solve a specific problem, which was devised by FIRST.

Three of the seven teams attended a regional tournament.

Also at CIS students can participate in the Robotics Boot Camp, a program to help further drive students to STEM and pique their interest to continue their robotics studies as they move from grade to grade.

Robotics students at Canton High School attended a FIRST Tech Challenge, in which they moved beyond the Lego robots to “designing and fabricating metal robots,” Mr. Bishop said.

He said the CHS team finished fourth overall at a regional tournament and placed at the state tournament, finishing in the top 20.

“What was most interesting is the students went to one qualifying tournament and our robot was not near ready,” Mr. Bishop said. “The students still showcased the grit to go out and try to learn from it, get ideas to improve and make it better.”

He said he was proud of how students learned from this one experience and improved their robot and came back strong at the state event.

“We were absolutely ecstatic to finish where we did,” Mr. Bishop said.

Students in the Canton Middle School STEM Academy created ROV’s, or Remotely Operated Vehicles, in this instance submarines.

Students designed and engineered attachments for the sub and tested it in a pool behind their school. The robot was supposed to complete specific tasks.

Mr. Bishop is developing a pilot program working in conjunction with the school libraries and media centers.

“I’ve always enjoyed working with robotics, it gives kids the ability to see what they are thinking in action,” Mr. Bishop said.

When students ask Mr. Bishop why they should take robotics classes, he says he is less interested in what careers students pursue, whether they opt to study engineering or not, rather, what is important to him is that students have an opportunity to use robotics to strengthen their problem solving skills.

“To take a problem apart and find solutions, communicate ideas effectively and represent your creativity,” are things that he hopes his students learn.

Mr. Bishop is currently planning a Parents Night to share details about the FIRST Lego League and to encourage parents to get involved. He is also organizing CHS robotics students to work with younger students to coach them in the Lego League events.

He hopes to also get more CHS



students to take a look at robotics and join the team. His hope is to connect with local engineers who can mentor and support the team.

“I think it’s a really worthy cause, taking young people, investing in their creativity and innovation,” he said.

Mr. Bishop credits the students who were part of the districts pilot program with keeping the interest in robotics alive and growing.

“We try to get them to taste the best way we can for them and encourage students to come eat,” Mr. Bishop said. “They really have done a fantastic job.”

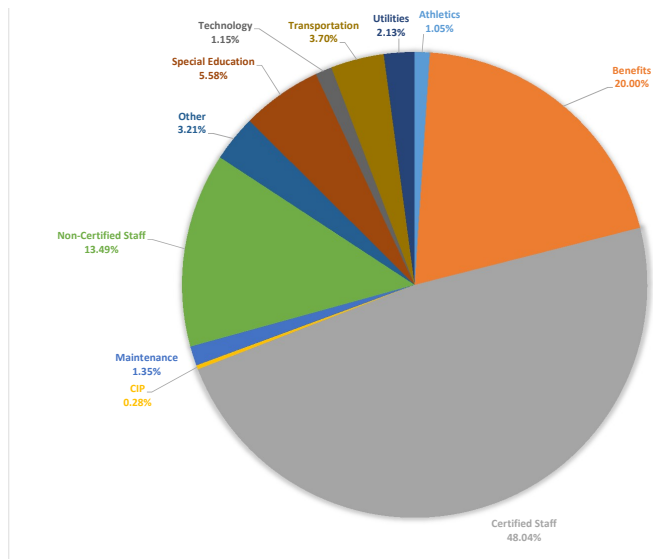
This spring Mr. Bishop attended the FIRST Robotics Championship in Detroit.

“It’s amazing all the things our kids in Canton are doing. I wouldn’t be surprised to see them on the world stage soon,” he said.

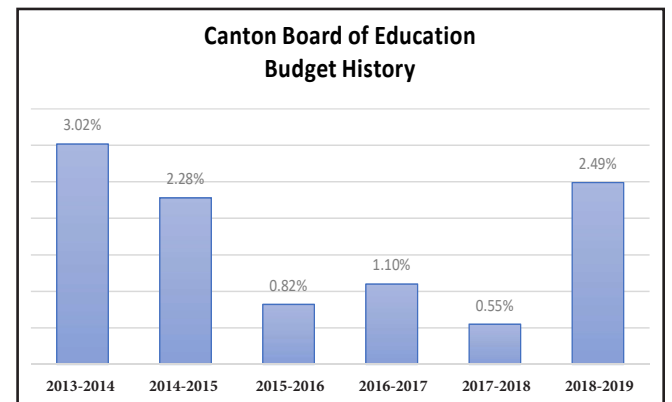


Education budget

Open Choice Grant Allocation 2018-2019 Budget



| | |
|---------------------------------------|----------------------|
| Canton Academy | \$ 45,000.00 |
| Magnet School Tuition | \$ 180,000.00 |
| Non-Certified Special Education Staff | \$ 185,000.00 |
| .5 FTE STEM Coordinator | \$ 27,819.00 |
| Choice Program Liason | \$ 27,350.00 |
| Grade 5 Teacher | \$ 54,475.00 |
| Salaries for Tutors | \$ 47,367.00 |
| Music Equipment & Repair | \$ 7,960.00 |
| CHS Textbooks | \$ 30,041.00 |
| CMS Textbooks | \$ 2,214.00 |
| Educational Technology | \$ 250,000.00 |
| Total | \$ 857,226.00 |



Canton Public Schools Board of Education 2018-2019 Budget \$25,934,233.10 an increase of 2.49% or \$629,687.61

Canton Public Schools 2018-2019 Capital Improvement Projects

| | | |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------|----------|
| CIP-CHS/CMS | Track & Field Long Term | \$74,000 |
| Total CIP = \$74,000 | | |

** The additional reduction of \$82,387 from the Board of Finance has not yet been allocated

First time's the charm for Destination Imagination teams

There is not one, but two teams that will be heading to Knoxville, Tenn. this spring to compete in the national Destination Imagination competition.

On March 24 two teams, consisting of students from Canton Intermediate School and Canton Middle School, won the state competition, each winning for their age range and category.

"It was just excitement," Stevie Juliano, Enrichment Specialist and co-team leader said about the big wins.

Destination Imagination, Ms. Juliano explained, is a "hands on system of learning that fosters creativity, courage and curious thinking"

Students are given an open-ended academic challenge, relating to some sort of field. They have six challenges they can choose from among different age levels. Another portion of the program is an instant challenge teams can compete in, with only eight minutes to finish the unknown challenge.

This is the first year Canton students have participated in Destination Imagination. The program appealed to Ms. Juliano, in part, because of the importance of creative thinking in order to be successful and complete each challenge.

"One of the things I love about it is the students do it," she said. "I can't give them an idea, I can ask them questions to lead them to come up with those ideas."

Team Nunya Business opted for a Drop-Zone Build, requiring them to build a structure between 7 to 9.5 inches high, have an opening of 3.5 inches and weigh under 175 grams.

The structure had to be made out of natural wood and be able to withstand five 10-pound weights being dropped from 48 inches up.

Team Unlikely Attraction had for their challenge to chose a carnival attraction, booth or game and put it in an unlikely location and explain three different scientific principles that would impact the carnival attraction based on its location. The team created a Guess Your Weight game on an imaginary planet.

The teams and their chaperones will venture to Tennessee on May 22, arriving a day before the competition to ensure their equipment, which will be shipped ahead of time, will be all right.

"For me it's so amazing to watch," Ms. Juliano said. "I have a student I've worked with in the past, just to watch her become a leader in herself and a leader in her group make sure her voice is heard," she said, adding another student was nervous about getting on stage at the state completion but after some encouragement decided to take a chance and complete the tasks with his teammates.

"He was so excited in the end," Ms. Juliano said. "He overcame his fear."



Fame! These kids are going to live forever



This past March students at Canton High School put on a production of “Fame the Musical.” For CHS senior Christine Babbitt, “Fame the Musical” involved multiple story lines with a grand set, contemporary themes and multi-faceted characters that captured the attention of those who came to see the show, the sixth production in which she been involved and the one that’s excited her the most since “Fiddler” her freshman year.

“It’s more complex, so I think it’s going to be more interesting to the audience,” said Christine before the show, she along with junior Sydney Anderson, were co-stage managers for the production.

The show followed a group of singers, dancers, actors and

musicians pursuing their dreams as the last class to graduate from the famed 46th Street location of the New York High School for Performing Arts before it merged with another, older institution at a new location.

Director Chuck Simmons said the multiple lead characters really does allowed many students to share the spotlight.

“We chose this musical because I wanted something that the kids could relate to,” he said. “This gave everybody a chance to be part of the show.”

Mr. Simmons said as far as he knows, the show the had not been done in the area for a number of years.

Between the cast, stage crew, tech crew and other helping hands, approximately 40 students, some 22 of which are seniors,

were involved in the production, Mr. Simmons said.

The first read-through for the production was done in December and things ramped up in January.

Mr. Simmons said that in addition to many student leaders,

the production staff was amazing. That includes musical director Diana Lawler, choreography Terry Rowe, costumer Paula Siebers, technical director Tom Moran and set director Dusty Rader.

–Story and photos by John Fitts

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is our district website with links at the top of each page to each of our schools – there is school contact info (phone numbers, etc.) on each of those pages.

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

Board of Education Meeting Dates 2018

| | |
|--------------|--------------|
| May 1 | September 25 |
| May 8 | October 9 |
| May 22 | October 23 |
| June 12 | November 13 |
| June 26 | November 27 |
| August 21 | December 11 |
| September 11 | |

Stories by Alicia B. Smith, Managing Editor, Turley Publications