

Superintendent's Newsletter

CANTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

To develop students who are competent and creative thinkers, curious and confident learners, and compassionate citizens

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School Committee Notes 4/15/10

Superintendent's Report:

Acknowledgements:

★Katie Birtwell who leads The Women in Natural Sciences Enrichment Program (WINS) at GMS took GMS students to UMass-Amherst for a day-long geology trip. During this trip, our students worked with Mariel Schottenfeld, a former GMS student, and a graduate of the UMASS geology program. Ms. Schottenfeld recently presented two seminars for the WINS girls and conducted an Earth Science class for a day, telling the students about opportunities in geology and sharing her own studies in volcanology and paleontology. Ms. Schottenfeld has also just won a full scholarship to graduate school at the University of Arizona. She had invited the WINS girls to Amherst to visit her professor, visit Amherst College to see the geology museum, and see the dinosaur footprints of the Connecticut Valley. Eight girls from GMS went on this trip, along with girls from CHS and the Norfolk Agricultural School. Nicole Forsyth, a senior at the Aggie and a WINS girl since seventh grade, was recently named Agricultural Student of the Year for Massachusetts and won a full scholarship to college. The WINS program is in its eleventh year at GMS.

★Congratulations are also in order for John Russell, music teacher at GMS. Recently, 76 middle school students participated in a production of Hello Dolly directed by Mr. Russell. The singing, dancing and storytel-

ling of this large group was simply outstanding. Kudos also to choreographer Aimee Delaporta, costumers Sue Harrington and Stacey Drew (Dolly's dresses were amazing!), the pit orchestra, and the HS tech crew.

FY11 Budget

This School Committee meeting was also a public hearing on the FY11 Budget. The Committee voted to make the following additional cuts in order to address the potential 1.4 million dollar deficit:

Eliminate (.6) GMS Computer Teacher

Eliminate 1.0 Educational Assistant

Replace OT/PT with COTA

Eliminate Data Manager and Data System from Cash Capital

The Committee also voted to remove \$47,000 in cash capital earmarked for the downpayment of textbooks that will be bonded over five years. This change will not defer the purchase of the textbooks. It will delay the payment of the first installment due and free up the \$47,000 for use within the FY'11 operating budget.

These cuts and changes are in addition to the \$676,321 in revenue offsets and reductions already voted by the Committee. The current grand total of cuts and revenue offsets voted by the Committee is \$934,787.

That leaves approximately \$440,000 in pending cuts that will need to be made unless additional revenues become available.

Once again, Dr. D'Auria reviewed the three potential means whereby some or all of these cuts might be avoided:

- 1) Support via Town Meeting vote to provide the school budget with additional funds
- 2) A successful Extraordinary Relief Petition from the State due to the increase in Special Education costs
- 3) Bringing out of district special education students back into the Canton Public Schools to better serve them educationally and save the tuition and transportation costs associated with out of district placements.

Each of these strategies will be pursued in the hopes of reducing or avoiding some or all of the above cuts already taken as well as the ones yet to be determined.

Proposal to Convert Room 303 in the High School to a Fitness Center

Principal Doug Dias, Athletic Director, Danny Erickson, and Wellness Director, Peter Boucher outlined an initial proposal to convert room 303 in Canton High School (across from the school library) into a fitness center that could eventually be used by all students, staff, and the community. The presenters described how the equipment in the current weight room and the cardiovascular equipment that the school currently has will be repositioned in this room. The Committee asked if there would be any need for funds to alter the space. There was some discussion about changing the flooring so that there could be improved sound absorption.

Dr. D'Auria mentioned that an anonymous donor approached him about providing \$50,000 to create this fitness center in honor of Scott Herr, a recent graduate of CHS who died this past winter in a tragic accident. Dr. D'Auria mentioned that he has worked closely with Joe and Linda Herr, Scott's parents to see if that would meet with their approval and it has. The Committee informally endorsed this idea and asked the presenters to come back to them with more detailed plans when they are ready.

No School Choice

The School Committee voted to *not* to participate in School Choice due to lack of space and the adverse impact that school choice would have on class sizes. School Choice would allow students from other towns to enroll in Canton's schools.

Other School News

Chairman Schutt requested that a subcommittee be formed involving members of the School Committee, central administration, the Board of Selectmen, and the Financial Advisory Committee. The purpose of this subcommittee would be to explore a number of issues in advance of contract negotiations beginning next fall.