

Town of Canterbury Newsletter
January 2018
Canterbury Public Schools

The district is a buzz with various activities. Read on, to hear about our new looping academic culture at Baldwin and a newly rejuvenated parent organization. At the elementary school, we are so looking forward to the grant funded biweekly storyteller visits and a new afterschool opportunity sponsored in part by the Canterbury Education Foundation and staffed by a parent volunteer and 2 teachers. The Special Education Department continues to offer a wide variety of educational opportunities to our students with the greatest needs. As always, we are so grateful to serve the students of Canterbury and look forward to many more wonderfilled days together.

BMS: Since the beginning of the school year, much has been happening at 45 Westminster Road. The new teaching staff has been welcomed to Canterbury and shown great promise in the profession. The student total is currently 177 students and the restructured looping teaching teams and scheduling has proven successful throughout the year. Students will have the same core teaching staff for Grade 5 and Grade 6 there is another teaching team for Grade 7 and Grade 8. This looping concept allows for more meaningful understanding of a student's learning style and rapport is known the subsequent year. Students also receive a sole course focused on writing rather than receiving reading and writing instruction together in the past. The importance of the skill of writing transcends all disciplines and is a needed skill as students enter their high school years. New curricular materials for all classes have been proven successful as well as students have a unified math program entitled Go Math! for all their middle school math experiences. The core reading program for Grade 5 is entitled Journeys and the program for Grades 6-8 is entitled Collections. This unified approach to curricular resources allows for research based consistency across the grade levels and allows for less transition among texts. Social studies texts are now aligned to the new State of Connecticut standards with American History taught in Grade 5 and 8 and themes of World History with Geography supporting skills taught in Grade 6 and 7. The importance of supporting the state standards is based on preparing students for future coursework in high school as well as for their performance on the Smarter Balanced Assessment. The newly implemented science standards are also referred to as the NGSS (Next Generation Science Standards). Baldwin is on target with transitioning to these standards in concert with the state timeframes. Resources for this transition were procured however, the model of the NGSS is more of an integrated approach to science skills and more lab experiences will be present.

The culture and climate of the Baldwin Middle School is inherently safe and nurturing based on the community in which sends their children however, as students grow, it is important to support them with positive decision making skills and modeling and since the community is focused on 9-14 year olds, fun and excitement are important. This year marks the 3rd annual Fall Festival, the inception of seasonal pep rallies which spotlight talent and art as well as a teacher/student competition, school wide programs focused on global perspectives, and the return of a PTO supported Field Day. As the school has been setting the ground work for student growth and independence over the previous 2 years, students have now begun to take direct

ownership of their community. Students have taken over morning announcements, coordinated fundraisers for library books, created a community outreach group, reinstated the school store, and some students are even taking an active role in the complex bus dismissal process.



The winter months have brought great growth and development of the athletics program and the music department. Girls and boys basketball teams have been dodging snow days to get their seasons in as the Cheer team prepares for their competition in early February. The music department held a successful winter concert with exceptional participation and performances by students in all grades.

The spring months look fruitful as the Grade 8 students finalize their choices of high schools. Their current choices are Norwich Free Academy, Griswold High School, Woodstock Academy, Killingly Vo-Ag, Norwich Tech, Ellis Tech, and Quinebaug Middle College. This group of eighth graders will definitely make a strong impact on each of the schools they attend. The baseball, softball, and track teams will be participating in regional competition and this due to the great coordination and hard work of the Baldwin Booster Club. As always, thank you for your support of public education and look for weekly updates on the school website.

CES: The beginning of the year was filled with a variety of staff activities but the main focus was the establishment of a classroom culture focused on our school values of honesty, kindness, respect, responsibility and safety. Staff have also engaged in professional development and new learning in the areas of instructional strategies, safety, data analysis, and technology.

December was filled with excited children! The teachers worked their magic at continuing to keep lessons engaging while adding special activities for the holidays. We had a wonderful concert from the CES Chorus on Friday, December 15th. They captivated us with their rendition of the Nutcracker which was full of difficult lyrics and complex choreography.

As we enter the second half of the year, we are focused on our students and their well-being. Our faculty is reviewing the academic data provided from a variety of assessments to gauge student progress and design an instructional response to develop student skill in given areas. Computer assessments have increased for students in Grades 1 – 4 which gives them

practice with the computer and the test! We continue to conduct regular safety drills so that the children can practice the protocols the staff have been taught.

Grant funds continue to assist us in bringing services to students and staff. One grant funded program provides for storytellers to visit, on a bi-weekly basis, grades K and PK. Each classroom has a visit of their own. This grant also gives us 4 assemblies for the other grades. This program is funded through an anonymous donation to the CT Storytellers and funds have been donated from our PTO and our Canterbury Educational Foundation. Our PK program continues to be primarily funded through the community Readiness Grant from the Office of Early Childhood.

Our parents have been an active part of our school community, donating their time to assist us in copying and shelving library books, as well as assisting in special projects. One such project was a recent family fun night; our parent advisory committee sponsored a "Build your Own Cityscape" activity. The community donated recycled items to be the building blocks and then the students had to chance to build! (See attached photos) Starting next month, a community group comprised of teachers, parents, and community members is offering an afterschool opportunity for students in science exploration. The Canterbury Educational Fund is also sponsoring funds for this activity. The first topic is making marble runs!

The spring promises to bring us all new hope and challenges. Together we will remain dedicated to the future of the children of Canterbury. We hope you can join us for our Celebration of the Arts in May. Watch our webpage for upcoming events.



Pupil Services: The special education department continues to thrive in providing individualized programming to eligible students ages 3-21. We are currently providing programs in both Canterbury Elementary School and Baldwin Middle School, as well as, Norwich Free Academy, Woodstock Academy, Griswold High School, Franklin Academy, Harmony Hill School, Norwich

Transition Academy and The Learning Clinic. Both New England Center for Children programs at CES and BMS are running smoothly, allowing children the opportunity to attend school in their home community and in the least restrictive environment which is required under the law.

Preschool screening will be held on April 26 & 27. If you have concerns regarding the development of your 3 or 4 year old, please contact the Pupil Services Office at 860-546-1040 to schedule an appointment to have your son/daughter screened.

The State of Connecticut, Bureau of Special Education has recently provided full access to staff from Special Ed Connection. Special Ed Connection is a resource that provides current trends in special education law, services, advancements and accomplishments. We are fortunate to have this resource provided to us at no cost.

Finally, we would like to express our sincere gratitude to the parents, guardians, and families of our students with disabilities. Without the continuous support and collaborative conversations between home and school, our students would not be achieving at the high levels they are.