



IN THIS ISSUE

Q&A: Major Issues Facing South Windsor	Pages 1 & 3
Test Scores Highlights/Results	Page 2
Resident Survey	Page 4
Class of 2002 Acceptances	Page 6

A MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD OF EDUCATION

Welcome to the first issue of *South Windsor Public Schools News*, the South Windsor Board of Education's official newsletter for all residents of our community. The goals of this newsletter are to provide you with a better understanding of your school system, and to encourage you to share your ideas and thoughts with the Board of Education. A confidential resident survey is included in this newsletter, and we hope you will take the time to fill it out and return it by **October 31, 2002**. This survey will help us understand your viewpoint and issues the board should be addressing.

South Windsor enrolls approximately 5,100 students in grades Pre-Kindergarten-12. Our students are housed in one Pre-K-5 school, four K-5 schools, one 6-8 middle school, and a high school that serves grades 9-12. Recently, the U.S. Department of Education designated Eli Terry Elementary School and Timothy Edwards Middle School "Blue Ribbon" National Schools of Excellence, and The Connecticut Commission of the Arts named Pleasant Valley Elementary School a Higher Order Thinking Skills school.

As a result of long-term planning, the school board was able to address

the facilities needs of the middle school and high school. As we look to the future of our growing school system, we are now faced with the task of addressing the facilities needs of our elementary schools. The board has collaborated with the community to develop a strategic plan for the schools that will serve as a guide to meeting the educational needs of all our students. Information in this newsletter is meant to provide you with a better understanding of what the strategic plan has accomplished to-date and how it will continue to guide the success of our schools and students in the future.

To help us understand what you think about our school system, we are including a confidential resident survey in this newsletter. Your responses are very important to us, and we hope that you will take a few minutes to fill out and return the postage-paid survey form by **October 31, 2002**.

As we begin the 2002-03 school year, we look forward to another exciting and successful year. We also look forward to receiving your responses to the resident survey and will include the results in the next newsletter, along with plans for improving communications.

Q&A: ISSUES FACING SOUTH WINDSOR PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Q How does the school board ensure that the South Windsor students continue to receive a high-quality education?

The school board requires the superintendent and staff to work with the community to develop a realistic strategic plan to meet the educational needs of our students. The plan is a roadmap that provides direction for the next three to five years. The school board then sets goals and objectives based on the plan. Components of the plan include quality of instruction, curriculum improvements, and increased community involvement. To ensure the success of this strategic plan and a high-quality education for our students, sustained community and town government support is required.

Q How has the school board enhanced curriculum to produce highly competent and productive students in today's competitive world?

In 2001-02, ten advanced placement courses were offered to enrich the curriculum and better prepare students for college level work. Students now have the opportunity to take Advanced Placement English literature, Spanish, French, calculus, biology, world history, statistics, music theory, chemistry, and physics. Over the past several years, all areas of the South Windsor curriculum have been revised to conform to national standards. In grades 3-8 before- and after-school enrichment programs have been established. These programs provide academic tutoring and teach time management skills necessary for educational success. South Windsor students excel in all curriculum standards as compared to school districts across the state and nation.

TEST SCORES HIGHLIGHTS



Each fall the administrative staff provides the school board with a status report on the annual student performance goals that the school board has approved.

Review of all test scores shows South Windsor students keep achieving higher scores in all standard tests from year-to-year.

Approximately 75% of the students taking the Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT) in grades 4, 6, and 8 met or exceeded the state's goal of excellence in math. Similar results were achieved in grades 6 and 8 for reading. Of the 1,257 students who took the Connecticut Mastery Test, the combined total of students who achieved at or above the state goal or proficiency ranged between 92% and 98% in eight out of nine testing areas. In grade four, 98% of our students achieved the goal or proficiency in math; 92% in reading; and 95% in language arts. Ninety-eight percent of students in the eighth-grade achieved goal or proficiency in math; 94% in reading; and 96% in language arts.

On the 2000 Connecticut Academic Performance Test (CAPT) taken in the tenth-grade, the percentage of South Windsor students who met the state goal was higher than the state average in all tests. Within our educational reference group, the percent of South Windsor students achieving the state goal exceeded that of other similar school districts in language arts, math, and the interdisciplinary test.

As the number of advanced placement courses offered at the high school has risen, test scores have risen as well. Sixty-five students from the class of 2002 took a total of 97 exams. Eighty-six percent of all tests taken were scored three or above. One hundred percent of the students who took the English literature and comprehension, Spanish, or world history exams scored a three or higher.

DISTRICT TEST RESULTS

Connecticut Mastery Test 1997-2001

Grade 4

	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
Math	73	76	78	78	76
Reading	69	67	69	67	72
Writing	53	63	57	57	66

Grade 6

	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
Math	68	74	76	78	80
Reading	72	79	81	74	80
Writing	49	61	67	72	77

Grade 8

	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
Math	65	68	71	74	74
Reading	74	78	78	77	84
Writing	67	60	73	66	74

Connecticut Academic Performance Test (CAPT)

Grade 10

	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
Math	67	60	59	66	60
Science	46	37	49	44	56
Language Arts	58	59	50	69	----
Interdisciplinary	66	53	52	65	----
Reading Across Disciplines					45
Writing Across Disciplines					56

Advanced Placement Test Results – Class of 2002

Subject/ # Tests Taken/ % Scoring 3 or Better

Biology	11	73%	Government & Politics	8	8%	Statistics	21	81%
Calculus	11	91%	Music Theory	4	75%	World History	5	100%
Chemistry	6	67%	Physics	15	87%			
English Lit. & Comp.	13	100%	Spanish	3	100%			

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS TO ISSUES FACING SOUTH WINDSOR PUBLIC SCHOOLS *continued from page 1*

Q What has the board done to actively involve the community in the education of South Windsor students?

A Major curricular and instructional initiatives have been established to unite school and community in the education effort that allow students to work in the community and learn from their experiences. Thirty-six students have been involved in these programs. Business partnerships have also been developed between the schools and various businesses and organizations in the South Windsor community.

Q How does the Board of Education ensure that we hire and retain quality teachers and administrators?

A There is a very demanding process of identifying and hiring high-quality staff. All new staff are required to go through a yearlong orientation program. Once teachers are hired, they also participate in ongoing professional development and training. The South Windsor professional development program has received national recognition for its excellence in this area. There is also a very comprehensive system for evaluating administrators and teachers. The most important component of our professional development and evaluation processes is the goal to improve student learning. Because we anticipate many vacancies due to retirements over the next several years, we have increased our focus on both professional development and staff evaluation.

Q In today's increasingly diversified society, how will the board promote awareness and appreciation of cultural diversity among our students and educators?

A The entire social studies curriculum in grades K-12 has been revised to include the study of more global communities and cultures. Over 2,000 students participated in assemblies and presentations of different cultures during the 2001-02 school year, over 2,500 students were involved in bias-reduction activities, and 1,200 students

took part in culture theme days. Diversity training has also been implemented for staff.

Q What improvements has the board made to develop technological proficiency in our students and staff?

A A specific goal of the strategic plan aims to develop efficiency in the use and application of technology by students and staff. All computers in the elementary schools have been upgraded or replaced for students and teachers. Three mobile labs have been added to each elementary school. At the middle school, four new computer labs have been established. The high school has undergone upgrading or replacement of all instructional computers. A new course has also been added to the curriculum, which trains students in CISCO infrastructure technology, a program that integrates voice, video, and data on a single network.

A professional training lab in technology has been established for all teachers. A data warehouse was created for all staff. This allows teachers and administrators to access important information about the curricula and teaching methods utilized throughout our schools. This information is then evaluated to determine which curricula and teaching methods are most successful.

To provide assistance and instruction for all of the technological upgrading in the schools, there are four new staff members, along with two new technology staff members, to manage our business information systems as well.

Q How does the board plan to incorporate the community into the decision-making process and gain their opinions?

A The board believes the success of the strategic plan for our South Windsor public schools relies on the input and support of the entire community. Communication between the board and community is essential to maintaining South Windsor as a high-quality school

district. The purpose of this newsletter and the enclosed community survey is to deliver the board's goals and vision and also hear from the community, so that the board will do a better job of communicating to all our residents.

Q What is the greatest challenge facing the school board over the next three to five years?

A It was through long-range planning that the school board addressed the school building needs of the high school and middle school students. As a result of planning, complete renovations and additions for both the high school and middle school were completed in 2000. Students attending these facilities today are in high-quality buildings that are capable of accommodating contemporary educational programs.

Now the challenge is addressing the needs of our elementary students in grades K-5. Currently the board is assessing the capability of our five elementary school buildings and determining their adequacy for not only accommodating the increase in enrollment, but also the kinds of educational programs that we have or would like to have in the future.

Studies were conducted in an effort to address these issues. One study completed by the New England School Development Council focused on the adequacy of the buildings with respect to educational programs. Another study completed by OR&L, an engineering firm, addressed the structural soundness of all the buildings. To assist the school board in making its decision, a citizen's advisory committee on elementary school facilities has been established. The citizen's advisory committee is expected to complete its work in December 2002, and the board anticipates acting on the recommendations in January 2003. The board hopes to bring a comprehensive plan to the public and town officials for review and understanding of this very important project.

SOUTH WINDSOR PUBLIC SCHOOLS RESIDENT SURVEY

Dear Resident:

We would like to know what you think about South Windsor Public Schools. Please take a few minutes to give us your opinions in this short survey. You can answer most of the questions by checking or circling the response you select. Some questions require that you write a few words. Individual responses to this survey will remain confidential. We will analyze your responses to determine your opinions about your schools. Highlights and recommendations of this survey will be in the next board newsletter. **Please fold, tape and send this postage paid document back by October 31, 2002.** Thank you for filling out this survey.

South Windsor Public Schools Board of Education

Background Information

You are the only one answering this survey. If not,
 number in your home who are answering this survey
 Own home Rent
 Years you have lived in South Windsor
 Have children in the school system. If checked, what
 grade levels: Pre-K K 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12
 Voted in the last town election
 Occupation _____ Retired

1. Do you believe the board of education is communicating effectively about our public schools? (*circle your answer*)

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral
 Disagree Strongly Disagree

2. What kinds of additional information about the schools would be helpful to you? *Please check all that apply.*

board of education goals
 elementary capital projects
 budget process
 additional activities fees
 details about the strategic plan
 teacher qualifications
 testing result details
 curriculum improvements
 other (please specify) _____

3. How do you receive information about South Windsor Public Schools? **Rank the top 6 in priority order.**

Hartford Courant
 Journal Inquirer
 South Windsor Reminder
 South Windsor Life
 public cable access
 friends and neighbors
 school website
 board of education members
 school employees (teachers, principals, etc.)
 town employees
 public meetings (board of ed., town council, etc.)
 other (please specify) _____

4. How would you like to receive information about South Windsor Public Schools? **Rank the top 6 in priority order.**

Hartford Courant
 Journal Inquirer
 South Windsor Reminder
 South Windsor Life
 public cable access
 friends and neighbors
 school website
 board of education newsletter
 school employees (teachers, principals, etc.)
 town employees
 public meetings (board of ed., town council, etc.)
 other (please specify) _____

5. Learning basic skills (reading, writing, mathematics) is most important. What else should each child learn and do in school? (*circle your answer*)

a. Understand and use new technologies (computers, internet, etc.)

Extremely Important Important Less Important

b. Participate in the arts

Extremely Important Important Less Important

c. Know more about the sciences

Extremely Important Important Less Important

d. Learn another language other than English beginning in elementary school

Extremely Important Important Less Important

e. Participate in a program of regularly scheduled physical activities and team sports

Extremely Important Important Less Important

f. Participate in a variety of extra-curricular activities, e.g., athletics, band, drama, clubs, etc.

Extremely Important Important Less Important

g. Appreciate and understand the cultural, ethnic, economic and social diversity of our society

Extremely Important Important Less Important

h. Develop and demonstrate civic and social responsibility

Extremely Important Important Less Important

6. **Please rank from 1 to 8** with 1 being most important, the following factors' importance in making your decision about school budgets and referendums.

costs
 property tax implications
 number of classrooms/space usage
 curriculum
 technology/computer usage
 enrollment growth
 capital needs for other town projects
 other, please specify _____

7. Investing in the renovation of existing buildings and/or the construction of new buildings will improve the quality of education our students receive.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral
 Disagree Strongly Disagree

8. There is a significant relationship between the quality of South Windsor Public Schools and property values in town.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral
 Disagree Strongly Disagree



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9. Do you believe the board of education is effective in communicating about the current and future goals of the school district?
yes no, if no please provide more detail

10. What are other issues the board of education should address?

11. What do you believe are the major issues facing public education today?

DETACH SURVEY ALONG PERFORATION

CLASS OF 2002 – SAMPLING OF COLLEGE ACCEPTANCES

American University
Arizona State University
Bard College
Boston College
Boston University
Bradley University
Brandeis University
Carnegie Mellon University
Central CT State University
Colby College
College of William and Mary
Columbia University
Dickinson College
Fordham University
Franklin & Marshall College
George Washington University
Georgia Institute of Technology
Harvard-Radcliffe University
Ithaca College
Lehigh University
Manhattan College
New Jersey Institute of Technology
New York University
Northeastern University
Ohio Wesleyan University
Pennsylvania State University
Pratt Institute
Providence College
Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute
Rhode Island School of Design
Rochester Institute of Technology
Rutgers University
Seton Hall University
Skidmore College
Southern CT State University
Syracuse University
Tulane University
University of California at Davis
University of Connecticut
University of Florida
University of Maryland
University of Miami
University of North Carolina at
Chapel Hill
University of South Carolina
University of Tennessee
University of Virginia
University of Wisconsin
Union College
Utica College
Vanderbilt University
Villanova University
Virginia Polytechnic Institute
Wake Forest University
Washington University at St. Louis
Wellesley College
Worcester Polytechnic Institute

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