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## 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
<b>Math</b>	73	76	78	78	76
<b>Reading</b>	69	67	69	67	72
<b>Writing</b>	53	63	57	57	66

#### Grade 6

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

#### Grade 8

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

### Connecticut Academic Performance Test (CAPT)

#### Grade 10

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

### Advanced Placement Test Results – Class of 2002

#### Subject/ # Tests Taken/ % Scoring 3 or Better

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