

Superintendent's Report: March 2025

*MARCH IS DESIGNATED AS BOE APPRECIATION MONTH
ALTHOUGH WE APPRECIATE OUR BOARD OF EDUCATION MEMBERS EVERY MONTH
OF THE YEAR, WE ARE EXTENDING A SPECIAL **THANK- YOU** THIS MONTH TO STEVE,
TERRY, ADAM, ROB, LAUREN, MICHAEL, AND JESSICA.*

Highlight of the Month: The creativity of our staff and our students was in high evidence throughout school during the Read Across America week (March 3-7). Highlights of the week included students and staff in favorite book character costumes, decorated classroom doors, unique student-designed potato characters displayed in the library, bookmarks, guest readers, and an author talk. Although never one to take credit for all she does behind the scenes for our students, it would be remiss to not to extend a special THANK YOU to Michelle Bibeault, the chief choreographer of this event.

News and Notes

Educational Leadership:

- I continue to focus on remaining current with the changes in policy. There are some policies that need to be addressed prior to the end of the year but the changes remain in flux at this time.
- I am also keeping current with the funding changes that are occurring at the State level.
 - The \$40 million being discussed relative to special education does not really benefit us—or other small towns. This money will be used to increase the percentage that Towns receive relative to the excess cost they spend on students with special needs. Given you only receive these dollars if you spend 4.5 times the amount of your cost per student, there is little to no opportunity for us to gain from this allocation.
 - The vote to remove the hold harmless clause from the allocation of ECS (education cost sharing) funds reduces the dollars the Town receives. If this decision is not reversed with a vote to retain the hold harmless clause, our allocation will be reduced by \$32,119 (a 3.6% reduction). Hold harmless keeps districts, who would otherwise experience a drop in funding, to their prior year level of funding – which for us was \$947,176. With the removal of the hold harmless clause our allocation will be \$915,057.
- At our April BOE meeting we will ask the BOE to adjust our calendar by two days to account for the additional snow days and set the date for graduation. Currently we need to add two days to the school calendar. Our last day of school will be Monday, June 16.
- The Community Foundation of Eastern Connecticut Scholarship application period is now open, with a deadline of Wednesday, April 23. The link has been posted on the school website.

Facilities:

- Our elevator is working!
- Lory Kneeland is planning to discuss with a plumber some ideas to improve issues with some of our toilets.
- Venture Communications will be drafting a plan to update our fire panel/alarm system. Once a draft plan is developed it will be reviewed with EIFC Fire Chief Doug Beaudoin. At this point in time this is a proactive plan for updating an old system.
- Lory Kneeland is also participating in a series of informational sessions concerning the updating of school HVAC systems. Eventually we will need to invest in a company to complete an HVAC inspection of our building.

Finances:

- We continue to monitor the status of our 2024-25 budget. Pending any unforeseen emergency repairs or student situations we, at this point, feel very positive about the status of our 2024-25 budget.

- Given the message recently received from the BOS regarding the Town's financial situation, the administrative team has been reviewing the 2025-26 BOE approved budget.

Collaboration:

- We received the draft audit report. Deb Richards is in the process of setting up a meeting with the auditor.
- Deb and I continue to discuss the 2025-26 Town-wide budget concerns.
- The administrative team has been discussing a possible summer school partnership with Brooklyn.
- I have been participating in discussions with our regional center about possible areas for small town collaboration. In addition, Kymberli has been attending the EastConn Area Business Officials meetings to keep current with possible collaborative efforts.

Comments on selected agenda items

XI. Unfinished Business

A. High School Discussion

The administration of Woodstock Academy will make a presentation to the BOE at the beginning of the meeting. Any other thoughts regarding high school choice can take place at this time.

B. Budget 2025-26. Discussion and possible action.

I received communication from Deb Richards concerning the status of the Town finances and the subsequent position of the BOS regarding next year's budget requests. The BOS would like all departments to have a – 0% – increase, however they understand that utilities, fuel, insurance and salaries have increased. The Town is starting the budget process in the red by almost 8% due to state cuts and mandates for motor vehicles and veteran abatements. They are requesting all departments to have minimal changes for this year, given that the taxpayers are going to shoulder all the state cuts and increases. The BOE is invited to attend a BOS budget meeting on March 20 at 7:00 to discuss our budget.

XII. New Business

A. Pay for sports

Although we do not acknowledge it as pay for play, we currently charge each student \$20 per sport to play. There are exceptions made when families are not financially able to pay. Our auditor questioned why these dollars are put in a school grant account rather than being put back into the general fund to offset sports costs in our budget. In addition, CABA also recommends that if we do collect fees for sports (or other activities), we should have a policy and procedure that outlines our process.

I am bringing this to the attention of the BOE so they can determine if they a.) want to continue the practice of students paying to participate in a sport; b.) wish to modify our current accounting practice to match what the auditor suggests and c.) if the BOE wishes to continue the practice, I recommend the policy committee be tasked with reviewing the CABA recommended policy to develop a policy of our own.

XIV. Financial Reports

A.& B. If there are any questions regarding any items mentioned in the administrative reports and/or financial documents please, if possible, send your questions or concerns in advance of the meeting so we can be prepared to discuss.

C. We request that the BOE consider approving the following recommended transfers.

\$10,000 from Substitutes, Certified (100.1000.1.121.00.5) to Tuition, SE, Private (100.1200.3.563.00.5)
 \$30,000 from E/B Insurance, Regular Program (100.1000.1.210.00.5) to Tuition, SE, Private (100.1200.3.563.00.5)
 \$1,783.84 from Purchased Services, Evals/Consults (100.2140.3.323.00.5) to Tuition, SE, Private (100.1200.3.563.00.5)

\$9,000 from Transportation, Secondary (100.2700.2.519.00.5) to Tuition, SE, Private (100.1200.3.563.00.5)
\$6,495.96 from Tuition, Secondary, WA (100.1000.2.561.31.5) to Tuition, SE, Private (100.1200.3.563.00.5)
\$6,278.00 from Tuition, Secondary, Killingly (100.1000.2.561.32.5) to Tuition, SE, Private (100.1200.3.563.00.5)
\$1,285.20 from Tuition, SE, Public (100.1200.3.561.00.5) to Tuition, SE, Private (100.1200.3.563.00.5)
\$1,867.00 from Tuition, Secondary, EastConn (100.1000.2.564.35.5) to Tuition, SE, Private (100.1200.3.563.00.5)

\$2,175.00 from Purchased Services, OT (100.2190.3.323.00.5) to Purchased Services, BCBA
(100.2190.3.323.03.5)

\$825.00 from Purchased Services, PT (100.2190.3.323.01.5) to Purchased Services, BCBA (100.2190.3.323.03.5)

\$1,889.00 from Purchased Services, Sports Officials (100.2190.1.350.00.5) to Purchased Services, Actuary
(100.2310.1.340.02.5)