



Community Newsletter

SUMMER 2019

Message from Chairman Bob Moore

2018-2019: A Great Year!

I want to thank the Regional School District 13 staff and students for an exciting and rewarding 2018-2019 school year. This newsletter, which also can be accessed online with live links, is part of the Board of Education's communication plan. The Board is committed to sharing accurate and important information with the community. We are proud of the accomplishments of our school district and thank you for your support throughout the year. "Connections Newsletters" are also sent out monthly from each school and from the superintendent outlining monthly highlights and successes in student achievement, well-being and engagement; the district's three strategic coherence goals. These newsletters can also be accessed on our district and school web pages under Quick Links: Publications. The Board encourages and welcomes your involvement and feedback.

We continue to experience great progress in student achievement, using informal and formal measures, including i-Ready, SBAC and SAT. In the visual and performing arts, 2018-2019 was exemplary, with events that showcased our students' talent from Pre-K through grade 12, and musical performances including *Beauty and the Beast*, *The Wizard of Oz*, and *Alice in Wonderland*.

Sixteen seniors graduated "With Honors and Distinction" (a grade point average of 90% or higher) and over 60% of the class earned three or more college credits during high school. There were twenty-four graduates who were members of the National Honor Society, twenty-one who were members of the Spanish Honor Society, thirteen who were members of the French Honor Society, and four who were members of the Latin Honor Society. Over 80% of the Class of 2019 will be attending college in the fall with students going to schools such as University of Rhode Island, Endicott College, Wake Forest University, University of Richmond, Pennsylvania State University, Boston University, University of Connecticut, and Quinnipiac University. Four students enlisted in the armed services.

Outside of the classroom, the Class of 2019 student athletes were the embodiment of sportsmanship, character and leadership. Forty-eight seniors received a varsity letter in the fall season, thirty-three in the winter season, and forty-three in the spring season. The Class of 2019 had twenty-three First Team All-Conference Athletes, nine All-State Athletes and twelve student athletes who will be continuing their athletic careers in college. In addition, seniors assisted our co-op school in winning a hockey state championship and we had a golf and track and field state champion. Seven seniors also earned the title of Shoreline Scholar Athlete by either being selected as First Team All-League, an individual state champion or a First Team All-State selection and having a 3.5 GPA.

While attending Coginchaug, the Class of 2019 excelled in visual and performing arts with over 25% of the graduates participating in the music program. Within the past four years, the Band and Chorus programs have won various divisional awards in The American School Band Directors' Association Honors Band, the Shoreline Music Festival, the Berklee Jazz Festival, the Virginia Beach Festival of Music Competition, the Southern Connecticut Regionals, the All-State Festival, the All-National Choir and Festival Disney. The Class of 2019 also performed and had major roles in the musicals *Good News*, *Guys and Dolls*, *Back to the 80's*, and most recently, *Beauty and the Beast*.

Valedictorian and Salutatorian

Special recognition goes to Class of 2019 valedictorian, Emily Dell'Orfano, and salutatorian and class president, Margaret Fiondella who have made outstanding contributions to Coginchaug High School and the entire community. Their [graduation remarks](#) were exceptional and enjoyed by everyone in attendance.

Odyssey of the Mind

Four teams of RSD 13 elementary and middle school students were sponsored by the Coginchaug Valley Education Foundation and competed at the Odyssey of the Mind state tournament in March. Two teams qualified to go to the World Finals at Michigan State University in May and placed 17th out of 50 teams and 23rd out of 63 teams. CVEF is going to continue to sponsor teams and has awarded a grant to cover materials costs.

School Budget: 2019-2020

This year brought a unique opportunity by deliberate negotiations of our health insurance program resulting in a 10% premium decrease. The superintendent and business manager in collaboration with Laura Francis and Ed Bailey

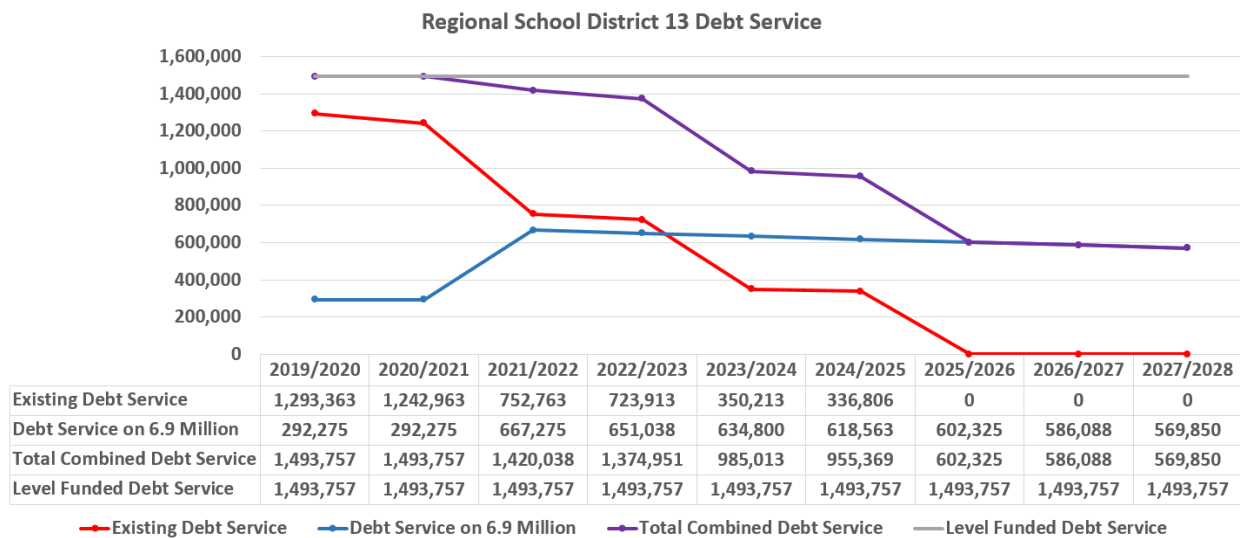




worked together to negotiate this favorable rate on behalf of the towns and district. The superintendent and Board produced a budget with no increase to the gross budget and a net decrease of \$877,485. This budget represents a \$1,002,090 decrease from five years ago. The budget covers the proposed decrease in Education Cost Sharing (ECS) funding to Durham and Middlefield and provides a means to cover the proposed town contribution to the Teachers' Retirement Board (TRB) pension fund. The district began its long-term capital improvement plan with voter approval of a \$6.9 million bond authorization.

School Building Projects

The required grant process to the state is underway for building alterations to accommodate the implementation of a primary grade (Pre-K–2) at Brewster School and intermediate grade configuration (3–5) at Memorial School with the planned closing of John Lyman School in two years. A referendum on the improvement costs will be held in November. We expect a 52% reimbursement from the state for this cost. Due to our capital plan, as shown below, this future debt will stay within our current debt service of \$1.5 million per year.



Global Partnership/Local Partnership

Coginchaug Regional High School's student exchange with Tongji High School in Ningbo, China has been established with 21 students from Ningbo visiting between September 30th and October 11th. Our students will travel to China from March 6th to the 13th. Kate Germond, teacher from our World Language department, is the coordinator of this exchange and has planned many activities for the fall. We invite you to attend these events which will be shared through the Town Times in September so that you too can share in this unique global experience with our students.

During the 2019-2020 school year, the Equity Steering Committee work that began a year ago will continue with a book study and student partnership between ten students from Coginchaug and Middletown High School. Students and committee members will be reading *Tell Me Who You Are* by Winona Guo and Priya Vulchi. A focus group of Coginchaug High School students facilitated by a representative from the State Education Resource Center offered valuable feedback regarding concepts of equity and diversity. Students suggested creating authentic opportunities for CRHS students to learn about other cultures and races, to understand and become more sensitive to actions and issues of discrimination, and to enhance their worldview through interactions with subject matter and people from other communities.

Welcome Brewster Principal: Mrs. Debra Murray

Brewster School and RSD 13 welcome school principal, Deb Murray who began in July. Mrs. Murray was most recently principal at Abraham Pierson Elementary School in Clinton. She has over twenty years' experience as a teacher, literacy specialist and a seasoned assistant principal in the New Britain Public School system, all within the Pre-K-5 level. Mrs. Murray also has leadership experience in the HOT School model. Our comprehensive interview process revealed her outstanding leadership skills as well as her genuinely positive, professional and approachable style.





Portrait of the Citizen

RSD 13's Portrait of the Citizen (originally called Portrait of the Graduate) is ongoing with a target date of October to present the draft document to the Board of Education. Short video links are posted on the website for up-to-date reviews of the most recent meetings. At our last meeting, we discussed the concept of citizenship, the unique characteristics of our communities and our shared understanding of, and commitment to, equity.

HOT (Higher Order Thinking) Approach Opportunities for RSD 13

Dr. Veronesi is working with the State Department of Education as they move to support interested school districts on sustaining a HOT approach in education. The HOT school model, as it was originally developed with whole school application, has changed to one that supports the general HOT approach in classrooms, schools and districts. Dr. Veronesi and Ms. Sharon Berndt, former kindergarten teacher at John Lyman School and current kindergarten teacher at Brewster School, wrote and successfully received grant funding to have Christopher Eaves, New York City artist and performer, as the keynote speaker at the district's convocation exercise in August. He will also work with teachers during the school year.

Board of Education Goals: Student Achievement, Well-Being, Engagement and Fiscal Management

Last year, the Board adopted goals for its actions and is moving to achieve the identified objectives including establishing a Well-Being Committee and furthering communication and engagement within our school community. Congratulations to our new Board member, Melissa Booth of Durham, and returning members Bob Yamartino, Lucy Petrella and Victor Friedrich. Thank you to Phil Augur for his valued service to the Board and District 13 over the last three years.

Thank You

On behalf of the Board of Education, I want to once again acknowledge and thank every student, staff member, teacher and administrator for their contribution to an amazing year. Thank you also to the parents and community members who supported the work of our schools and attended school events and Board of Education meetings.

First Day of School

The first day of school for students is Wednesday, August 28th. We look forward to another successful school year. Please check out the [RSD 13 homepage](#) to keep current with our district's many events and accomplishments. Our [district calendar](#) is a great way to see, at a glance, upcoming Board of Education and committee meetings as well as other school events. If you have any questions or concerns about your child's upcoming school year, please contact the school office.





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