

The Bulletin

Norwich, CT

OUTLOOK: Strategic plan will help Canterbury schools navigate



| -

Canterbury Superintendent Lois C. Knapton, who is in her first year as superintendent, wants to institute a plan to help the school system navigate new curriculum, standardized testing and teacher evaluations, all new mandates from the state. Elizabeth Regan/NorwichBulletin.com

By Elizabeth Regan

eregan@norwichbulletin.com (860) 425-4256

Posted Apr. 26, 2014 @ 9:08 pm

Superintendent Lois C. Knapton is instituting a plan to help the school system navigate what she calls the uncharted waters of a new curriculum, standardized testing and teacher evaluations. The Board of Education in March approved a contract with EASTCONN, a nonprofit educational firm that will help create a strategic plan.

Knapton, who is in her first year as a superintendent, said, "If you don't know where you're going, you can't get there."

But Knapton said Canterbury is in good shape. Dr. Helen Baldwin Middle School was recognized by the state as an excelling school and a school of distinction, a dual honor attained by fewer than 70 schools. The classification is based on student performance on last year's standardized mastery test.

Knapton plans to put together a 20-member group of staff, parents, town leaders and residents to help create a 5- to 10-year vision plan for education.

Scott Nierendorf, EASTCONN director of teaching and learning, is working with Knapton to help the district identify priorities and develop an action plan with specific goals. Nierendorf said he also is working with Putnam on its strategic plan and has consulted with Pomfret and Colchester in the past.

Nierendorf said the process let districts plan how to allocate resources and create clear communication with the community. Both are important, he said, as school districts deal with the new state initiatives. "In our experience, strategic planning is somewhat cyclical, increasing in frequency when the educational, financial and political landscapes create the need," he said.

Knapton welcomes the help.

"Taking the job in the midst of all this upheaval has been challenging," she said.

Knapton said technology is one of the key issues she hopes to see addressed.

The district recently expanded to three computer labs to meet the new demands of state-mandated Internet-based testing. But there are fewer than five interactive white boards in each school and no tablets, she said.

Canterbury's strategic plan, which Knapton hopes will be

completed by September, will be a fluid document to which changes can be made and against which progress can be assessed. The document will benefit the Board of Education as a tool it can revisit at each of its monthly meetings, she said.