

Chapter 10

EDUCATION

Public Schools

The school budget has the single largest impact on our tax rate yet is the one aspect of the Town that cannot be adequately addressed by the Planning and other Town Boards. Since Canterbury's earliest years, one room schoolhouses have arisen on an "as needed" basis to serve pockets of residential settlement. In the 1950s it became apparent that a central school facility would better serve the Town's needs. The construction of the Canterbury Elementary school was in large part due to the volunteer efforts of the community.

In 1971 Canterbury voted to join the Shaker Regional School District with Belmont. Growth of both towns in the district resulted in unmet facilities needs and gradual facility crowding during the 1970s and continuing into the 1980s. The 1996-7 enrollment in the district was approximately 1,460 students, including 107 kindergarteners. Approximately 250 students were children from Canterbury. Under the current funding formula, Canterbury students comprise approximately 18% of the students, and Canterbury is paying approximately 23% of the School District budget.

In 1985 a new elementary school was built in Belmont, and in 1991 a new addition and renovated classroom space at Canterbury Elementary School were completed. The Shaker Regional School District student population has continued to grow and efforts to address space needs were met in 1997 when the district voted funds to build a new high school and renovate the old high school for use as a middle school.

With the manufacturing base in New Hampshire and New England declining, new employment opportunities for Canterbury's schoolchildren must be sought in other sectors of the economy. To become more employable in today's technological society, to be self-supporting and to qualify for higher wages, it is vital that we strongly encourage our children to seek education beyond high school.

Continuing Education Resources

The Town has the opportunity to supplement the education of not only our children but all citizens in many ways. Historical resources such as Shaker Village and the Historical Society should be utilized to provide the link to the past so vital to a community's sense of tradition. The Conservation Commission can help to increase the environmental awareness of our citizens by further developing the scenic and natural areas under their control.

The Police and Fire Departments could be a valuable resource for Public Safety education. Bicycle safety programs and CPR training are examples of the educational opportunities in those areas.

Informal educational/informational opportunities exist such as the Friday Night Forums and Historical Society programs. The Town Library and school facilities could be expanded to provide computer access and continuing education for all citizens within the Town.

Long-Range Goals

1. Provide supplemental educational opportunities to children and adults.
2. Ensure cost-effective public education resources.

Recommended Actions

1. Review capabilities of all Town resources to provide supplemental educational opportunities to Canterbury's citizens of all ages.
2. Initiate a study to determine whether the current funding formula equitably allocates responsibility for school costs between Belmont and Canterbury. **Selectmen**
3. Facilitate community-wide computer access and enhance educational opportunities for all citizens. **Selectmen**