

## **Stafford Public Schools**

### **General Information**

Stafford enrolls approximately 1,545 students, pre-kindergarten through grade 12, in five schools: three elementary, one middle and one high school. The mission of the school district is to enable all students to realize their full potential as lifelong learners and responsible citizens. This disposition is based upon the conviction that the dignity and worth of each child is of primary concern and that the aim of education is to prepare and inspire our youth to assume meaningful roles in a culturally diverse, ever-changing world.

In an effort to prepare all students for success in school and life, the school district purposefully utilizes early intervention programs and focused staff development activities to develop essential skills and content knowledge as specified in Connecticut Core Standards. With early literacy a priority, strong pre-kindergarten and full-day kindergarten programs focus on academics, routines, and social skills to ensure a solid foundation. The use of the Responsive Classroom and Second Step models promote the development of positive character traits in our youngest students.

Curriculum is designed to provide challenging, motivating and thought provoking educational experiences, which address the individual and diverse academic, social and emotional needs of all students. Stafford outperforms students on regional, State, and national averages on assessments. In addition to Algebra I and World Language credit options at the middle school, we offer Early College Experience (ECE), Advanced Placement (AP) and Honors courses at the high school. Students also enroll in courses such as Research & Development, in which students built a hovercraft with donations through community partnerships, and Video Game Development. Recent enrichment activities also include international trips to Italy and Quebec City.

With a projected four-year graduation rate greater than 95%, we offer programs such as Unified Sports, Unified Art and Unified Physical Education, which promote a positive school culture. The recipient of numerous sportsmanship, all-conference, all-state, and scholar athlete awards, we offer football, basketball, baseball, softball, golf, soccer, wrestling, indoor & outdoor track, cross country, cheerleading, and field hockey. The district benefits from the services of a full-time athletic trainer to monitor and ensure the safety of our athletes.

In addition to Programs After School in Stafford (P.A.S.S.) for our elementary students, and enrichment activities for middle school students such as Geocaching and 3-D Printing, students at the secondary levels also have the opportunity to participate in a variety of clubs such as Service Corps, Bowling, Yearbook, and Adventure Club, through which students enjoy ski and snowboarding trips to a local ski area, to name a few. We also provide transition services to eligible students, working with the community to provide valuable work experiences at local grocery stores and businesses.

Our public schools also offer strong performing arts programs beginning with band and chorus in the elementary school. As early as kindergarten and first grade, children enjoy performing in productions such as *Lemonade* and *Big, Beautiful Planet*, collaborative efforts between our Art and Music departments. Ninety-three 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade students participate in band and over 200 in chorus at the elementary school. Our middle school Stage & Select choirs have won awards at national competitions and consistently have sell-out performances of productions such as *Seussical* and *Aladdin*. Likewise, offering preview performances for our senior citizens, the

community experiences enjoyment during high school productions of *Singing in the Rain*, *Alice in Wonderland*, and *Mary Poppins*, to name a few. The Madrigal Feaste, a dinner theater production, is an annual event you don't want to miss! Students also perform at West Point, Gillette's Castle, Sturbridge Village, Enfield Hospice, the Big E, nursing homes, carole sings and parades, to name a few.

In the area of visual arts, more than 350 students participated in our annual Art Show at the public library as well as at the Stafford Fall Arts Festival, in partnership with local artists. Families have the opportunity to purchase student artwork (e.g. aprons, ornaments, mugs, shirts, etc.) through *Artsonia* and *Square One*, memorializing their accomplishments with gifts that last a lifetime! Artwork produced by our students in Unified Art class was featured on Special Olympics "Penguin Plunge" note cards, which proved to be an appreciated gift as presented to our Board of Education.

Stafford continues to participate in inter-district programs, such as Legacy Exploration and The 4<sup>th</sup> R- Robotics. Access to Internet-based activities promotes our students' understanding of other cultures. Our students, as young as at the primary level, participate in distance learning projects with schools in other regions. For example, kindergartners Skyped with a classmate in Bangalor, India, and went on a virtual tour that included houses, schools, McDonald's and a shopping mall. Concurrently, our elementary students engaged in a "Guess the States" project with students in Maine and Michigan, and middle school students continue their partnership with the scientists of the Long Island Sound project.

Our students recognize the importance of giving back to the community. We take pride in the success of our Field Hockey team's annual "Play for the Cure" event, which raised nearly \$3,000 this year. Our district also makes sizable monetary donations to Safe Net Ministries, which meets the needs of Stafford and Union residents, who are "caught in difficult, transitional times in their lives," by providing temporary assistance with food, clothing, utilities and shelter.

Stafford recognizes the importance of home-school collaboration in the success of each child. Therefore, we use a variety of communication methods including, but not limited to, a web-based portal for parents to access their child's grades and assignments, web pages for each school, electronic messaging, digital and print newsletters, home visits, volunteer programs, and informational events. Through our Family Resource Center and School Readiness programs, parents at the primary level participate in many activities, which support their children's growth and development. Parents and guardians are encouraged to join the PTO/PTA and Partners in Education (P.I.E.), which is a parent-teacher-student organization at the high school. In addition, we are fortunate to have active and enthusiastic athletic and booster clubs, which host and support programs for students and families.

Ranked the "3<sup>rd</sup> Best School District for Your Buck in Connecticut" by NerdWallet, Inc. and 2015 U.S. News & World Report Bronze Award Winner for America's Best High Schools, in partnership with students, families and the community, our schools strive to nurture learners that are productive, responsible, independent and dedicated to excellence (P.R.I.D.E.), thereby reflecting the district's theme, "It takes a whole village to raise a child".