

Cape Schools Open Minds and Open Doors

Community • Academics • Passion • Ethics

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The School Board has approved the 2021-2022 School Year calendar. Students' first day of school will be September 1, which is before Labor Day. The primary reason for this is that by law, we must have no more than 5 dissimilar days from the other school districts in our area who send students to PATHS. Some years we start school after Labor Day, if the holiday is very early in September. There will be a scheduled remote learning day for everyone on November 2, election day, providing an extra day of student learning. This has typically been a day off for students and a professional development day for teachers. Similar to this year, there will be 5 half day Wednesdays for students, allowing time for teacher professional development. These will be September 28, January 12, February 9, April 6 and May 11.

The School Board continues to move forward with the search for a new superintendent. An Interview Committee has been formed, consisting of administrators, teachers, school board members, a school nurse, our facilities director, our athletic director, our special ed director and parents. Interviews will begin in the coming weeks. You can stay up to date by checking the website. There is a direct link right on the homepage.

The Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Task Force continues to learn, think and discuss. Guest Speaker, Kate Slater, spoke to the group about her experience of coming to terms with this topic as a white woman having grown up in Yarmouth, Maine. She teaches a course at UNH on the subject and commented that, "DEI has to be baked into the fabric of the schools, not just an arm, but a foundation." She recommended an Equity Audit, which the Task Force is discussing, to look at the school's practices and helping to build racial justice within the school system.

There were 10 proposals submitted to the district's Request for Qualifications (RFQ) from architects and engineering for the work of creating a concept design regarding a new Pond Cove and Middle School. The Interview Committee spoke in depth with five firms and recommended the hire of Colby and Company/ Simon Architect. The School Board confirmed this recommendation with a unanimous vote during the March 9th Regular Business meeting.

In the past, the schools have shared a Director of Technology with the town, but after a year of remote learning it has become clear that the schools need a director that is able to focus on just the educational aspect of technology. The Technology Committee is working on a new job description for the Director of Educational Technology.

The School Board and administration have begun 3 new action steps to improve communication around the very important topic of Covid-19. The superintendent is providing weekly updates on Fridays, an FAQ that we add to when needed has been created, and there is a standing Covid-19 update at the School Board Regular Business meetings. A District Planning Committee has been formed, consisting of administrators, school board members, teachers, school nurses, the school doctor, parents and doctors from the community. The meetings are scheduled to begin Tuesday, March 16, March 30, April 6 and April 13 at 3:00 via Zoom. These meetings are recorded and open to the public. We hope that with these steps, we can continue to keep the public informed. Planning for the reopening of schools is a very fluid process. We are working hard to keep the public in the loop and share important details when able.

FINANCE UPDATE:

The School Board continues to review and refine the proposed FY 21 budget, having held two additional Budget Workshop Q&A Meetings since our last update in the Courier. In addition to continued dialog with administrators regarding specific budget proposals, the Board has heard presentations on the Maine Essential Programs and Services funding and undesignated fund balance. The Board reviews and develops the budget with the following goals as its guiding principles: 1. Move CESD forward with our strategic plan goals; 2. Empower students with the academic, personal, and social knowledge and skills to build balanced and purposeful lives; 3. Ensure equity and access to opportunities for all Cape students; and 4. Will reflect a careful examination of line items and consideration of the success and effectiveness of the expenditures in order to provide a fiscally responsible budget. At our March 9, 2021 Business Meeting the Board voted to include an additional fifth goal for the FY 22 budget - to prioritize the return to full time, in-person learning and support post-pandemic academic and social-emotional needs of all students. The Board's next Budget Workshop Q&A will be on March 23 at 6:30 via Zoom which will include discussions of insurance costs among other topics, and all materials can be found on the School website.

POLICY UPDATE:

The School Board recently approved updates to "Teaching about Controversial Issues" (policy IMB), "Accommodation of Sincere Beliefs in Required Instruction" (policy IMBB). These policies give guidance to teachers about the educational purpose, age/maturity considerations, and rights of students in the discussion of controversial issues. The committee has been asked by Nutrition Director Peter Esposito to establish policy DJF, "School Nutrition Procurement Procedures and Code of Conduct" in order to facilitate bulk ordering with our partner schools in the Greater Sebago Education Association. Work is also being done to update all policies to have gender-neutral language. Policy committee meets on the last Monday of each month, currently via Zoom, and is open to the public.

UPCOMING MEETINGS:

District Planning Committee: Tuesday, March 16 - 3:00pm

Special Business Meeting: Tuesday, March 16 - 6:30pm

District Planning Committee: Tuesday, March 23 - 3:00pm

School Board Workshop: Tuesday, March 23 - 6:30pm

Policy Committee: Tuesday, March 29 - 3:00pm