



PHILLIP J. POTENZIANO, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

SHAWN L. LAMBERT
Assistant Superintendent

JESSICA A. YATES, Ph.D.
Director of Special Education

BRUNSWICK SCHOOL DEPARTMENT

Office of the Superintendent
46 Federal Street
Brunswick, Maine 04011
Telephone (207) 319-1900
FAX (207) 725-1700

KELLY WENTWORTH
Director of Finance

SUELLYN SANTIAGO
Chief Academic Officer

SUE WOODHAMS, Ed.D./ET
*Director of Technology and
Information Systems*

November 9, 2021

Dear Brunswick School Community:

With the formal investigations into the hazing incident involving the Brunswick High School Football Team now closed, as chair and vice-chair of the Brunswick School Board, we wanted to share the steps the district is taking to move forward from this incident. Student well-being and success are at the center of our efforts as we look ahead.

We believe the district administration has taken this matter seriously and has acted expeditiously in a challenging situation, engaging legal counsel and following existing protocols regarding student discipline. This includes a restorative approach for those students directly responsible for the incident. We understand the grave disappointment our football program families have experienced with the loss of their season, and are grateful that the administration was able to make sure that other team members still had access to each other, and an opportunity to continue participating in some team activities.

The Board, particularly the Policy Committee, is reviewing policies and procedures identified by the school department's investigation as requiring updates to provide better and more precise direction to administrators. These policy changes will address student supervision and off-site activities, among others, focused on keeping our students safe in an environment free of hazing, bullying, harassment, and other inappropriate conduct.

We appreciate the fact that some students, who were not involved in the incident, took the time to share their experiences of feeling singled out within the school. We will make every effort to ensure they are provided with the support and respect they deserve through changes in policy and school culture, now and in the future.

The administration is also working on adjustments to employee training and updating the student-athlete handbook in accordance with any forthcoming changes to policies and procedures.

Continued support and counseling services for students will be provided at Brunswick High School. In addition, to help remove barriers inherent to reporting sensitive incidents such as bullying, hazing, or harassment, the Superintendent is currently reviewing approaches to implementing an anonymous reporting system which will be formally presented to the Board for feedback.

The Board recognizes the importance of community input to these issues. Therefore, we would like to sincerely thank those who have reached out to us, attended our meetings, and sent public comments over the past several months to share their thoughts and concerns. We welcome and encourage your continued engagement.

The Board will be launching a district-wide strategic planning process later this school year, and we ask that the community continue to engage with us as student needs, safety, and well-being will be the core of our new planning process. We will be setting up numerous opportunities for community input in the strategic planning process through both public forums and listening sessions, as well as surveys and focus group meetings. We will strive to hear from the whole community as we set goals for the next five years.

The Board is committed to rebuilding the Brunswick High School football program in the wake of these challenges. We value the important role that athletic programs and all other extracurricular activities play in the lives of our students, families, and community. We are committed to making sure that every student in the Brunswick School District can be sure they are entering a safe and supportive learning environment every time they step off the bus, pass through the doors of our buildings, set foot on an athletics field, sit in an auditorium, or participate in any other school-sponsored event or activity. This work is a priority for the Board, and we take our responsibility seriously.

Please do not hesitate to reach out to either of us or the rest of the Board if you would like to share your ideas, suggestions, concerns or ask questions as we move forward with this critical work.

Sincerely,

William Thompson, Board Chair
Beth Bisson, Board Vice-Chair