

Dear Cape Community,

I hope all of you had a wonderful summer with family and friends. This has been an extremely busy summer for the Cape Elizabeth School Department. Foremost, I want to express my public thanks and appreciation for all those employees who worked so hard over the summer to prepare us for our opening on 9/1. These employees include custodians who washed and waxed every inch of our very hot schools, maintenance who made necessary repairs throughout the facilities, technology who prepared devices and our network, business office staff for completing FY21 and opening FY22 payroll and purchases, and Special Education and Central Office for preparing for the arrival of students and staff. Much of this work goes unseen, but I want these employees to know they are valued and appreciated. I also want to welcome the nearly 30 new employees to the district. In particular I want to highlight our new administrators including Assistant Superintendent Michelle McClellan, Director of Educational Technology Troy Patterson, Facilities Director David Bagdasarian, Transportation Director Christopher Storer, and CEHS Principal John Springer. We are thrilled to have such talented people join us.

As the new Superintendent, I have focused on Listening, Learning, and Leading through my entry plan. My aim is to hear from a variety of stakeholders as I learn about the strengths and challenges of the Cape Elizabeth school system and community. I have been thrilled to meet with over 100 people so far and to be honest, I am most excited to meet with students in the weeks ahead. Once I have completed my entry conversations later this school year I will share my findings as they will help guide my leadership moving forward. I recognize there has been some turnover in the superintendency in Cape over the past 10+ years. My hope is that we will be a great match and I can provide some stability and successful leadership for years to come.

Based upon the School Board *Fall 2021 Return to School Plan*, our number one planning priority this summer was to devise how to safely bring all students and staff back to school for full-time in-person instruction. We did this important work through The District Planning Committee (DPC), comprised of 30+ stakeholders, which was created to review and discuss COVID-19 information in order to provide the School Board and School Administration recommendations on the mitigation measures to be used in our schools during the 2021-22 school year. The DPC met on 8/4/21 and 8/12/21 to review recommendations from the CDC, the ME CDC, Dr. Shah, our school physician (Dr. Sonti), and our three school nurses. The School Board endorsed the following recommendations at their meeting on 8/16/21:

1. Universal masking for everyone in a school facility or transport no matter vaccination status.
 - a. Exception: Staff working alone in their classroom or workstation
 - b. Exception: Students eating at least three feet apart facing the same direction
 - c. Exception: Staff eating at least six feet apart
2. Pooled testing offered to all students and staff on a voluntary basis
3. As much social distancing as tenable on school transportation, in classrooms, and in the cafeteria that allows for full-time access to learning. 3 feet distance or more will be used wherever possible.

4. Daily symptom checklist conducted by parents/guardians and for parents/guardians to report absences related to these symptoms per building protocol.
5. Continue same hand sanitization practices as utilized during the 2020-21 school year.
6. Continue the same disinfectant strategies as utilized in the spring of 2020-21.
7. Allow for only outdoor field trips.
8. Limit non-essential visitors/volunteers inside the school building.

The District Planning Committee will meet again on 10/5/21 to review the efficacy of the mitigation measures and make recommendations if necessary for adjustments based upon new updates from CDC, ME CDC, and Dr. Shah with input from Dr. Sonti, our school nurses, administrators, and staff. Local COVID-19 data will be used to inform decision making.

Implementing the various COVID-19 mitigation measures successfully is important, however we are also focusing intently on teaching, learning, and supporting our students' social and emotional needs. We have outstanding educators and they are excited to get to know their students, build their classroom communities, and then provide curriculum and instruction based on student strengths and needs. We also recognize that students are likely feeling the stress and strain of the epidemic on top of the typical stress they may experience. Our social workers, school counselors, and school nurses are working diligently to prepare our staff to meet the various needs of our students.

In closing, I want to thank the community for providing me such a warm welcome. Everyone I have met has been so kind and supportive. Please feel free to say hello to me if you see me in town or at a school event. Thanks again for all each of you do to support our schools and our community. Cape Elizabeth is a special place and I am thrilled to be a part of it.