

From the Office of the Superintendent of Schools

SCHOOL BOARD NEWS

October 15, 2019

It's been a very full month since the last newsletter. Recent events associated with CEHS have, understandably, eclipsed so many positive ones. To name a few, the opening of the new Pond Cove Playground and Outdoor Learning Center; the continued planting of tulip bulbs in support of the Yellow Tulip Project, the Thompson Family Mental Health Initiative and the CEMS "You Will Be Found" campaign; a collaborative "Unity Rally" organized by CEHS administration and students in support of survivors of sexual assault; as well as the completion of the CESD application for the Maine Department of Education's School Revolving Renovation Fund (SRRF). We have so much to be proud of and grateful for and must try to keep in the balance during times of difficulty.

On October 8th the School Board provided a statement regarding recent student concerns and news articles about sexual harassment & assault allegations at CEHS. The most crucial information we conveyed is that student safety and wellbeing is our greatest priority. The School Board values and strives for safety above all else. Secondly, after extensive discussions with administrators and review of available facts, the School Board is satisfied that administration adhered to policy with great sensitivity. We acknowledge that not all students agree with our conclusion and therefore, remain committed to working together so that all students feel heard, safe, and respected.

Our role as a School Board is to uphold policy while doing all we can to keep our students safe and supported. In any situation involving allegations of sexual assault, the administration does its best to respect the rights of both the accuser and the accused, to investigate the allegations as thoroughly as possible, and to take prompt remedial action where warranted. Sometimes, it is impossible to come to a definitive conclusion about what did or did not happen, particularly when the event took place

off school grounds and outside of school hours. However, we expect that the administration will take whatever steps are necessary to ensure that any students who feel violated are supported and ask that the community respect and trust the process.

The Policy Committee will continue discussions surrounding procedures Student Discrimination and Harassment Complaint Procedure (ACAA-R) and Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting (JLF-R) at the next meeting on October 22nd at 3:00PM in the Jordan Conference Room at Town Hall. As always, the public is welcome to attend.

As mentioned, it has been a very full month. The School Board held their annual retreat on September 24th at the Purpoodock Club. Typically, these retreats focus on developing annual School Board goals. However, with the successful completion of the Futures Search in March of 2019, the School Board turned their attention to refining the goals identified from the data collected from the Future Search process. Over one hundred community members, staff, and students contributed to the process of identifying the goal areas considered most important to include in the school department's 5-year Strategic Plan.

At the October 8th Regular Business Meeting, the School Board adopted the following **Cape Elizabeth School Department Goals for the 2020 - 2025 Strategic Plan:**

- **Health and Wellbeing:** Our schools will provide a supportive learning environment in which physical, social, and emotional wellbeing are valued and promoted.
- **Global Competency:** Our students will be personally responsible, aware, empathetic, and engaged local and global citizens.
- **Multiple Pathways and Definitions of Success:** Our schools will value, promote, and celebrate multiple pathways and definitions of success.
- **Safe, Sustainable, and Effective Facilities:** Our schools will be

safe and effective facilities. They will be updated and maintained to meet the needs of students and staff in accordance with longterm financial planning.

- **Environmental Responsibility:** The school department will prioritize environmental responsibility, including stewardship and sustainability.

In the following months, Dr. Wolfrom and administrators will develop a Strategic Plan with objectives that support these goals within all three school buildings.

Also, during the October 8th meeting, the School Board discussed and adopted the following **2019-2020 School Board Goals:**

1. Support a new Strategic Plan.
2. Continue the collaborative and proactive budget developmental process that includes stakeholders such as the Town Council and community members.
3. Consider the finding of the Facilities Study, take into consideration the recommendations of the Building Committee, and make strategic investments which modernize and repair aging school buildings and grounds as well as maximize student learning and safety.
4. Cultivate and leverage community involvement with the Cape Elizabeth School Department.

As always, recordings of all School Board Regular Business Meetings are available at the [CETV website](#) and [CESD website](#).

With ongoing support of one of these goals, the Finance Sub-Committee met again on Wednesday, October 9th. Perry Schwarz, Director of Facilities and Transportation, joined the meeting to discuss the need for reviewing the operating, maintenance, and organizational structure of this department. Under a “one-town concept,” the ability to provide service and track operating costs becomes more complicated. The sub-committee agreed to support a comprehensive evaluation of the department’s responsibilities to both the town and the schools.

In a separate meeting on the same day Superintendent Dr. Wolfrom, School Board Chair Susana Measelle Hubbs and Vice Chairs, Heather Altenburg and Kimberly Carr met with Town Manager, Matt Sturgis, and Town Clerk, Debra Lane, to discuss the pros and cons of holding elections within the Cape Elizabeth High School. From the perspective of the Town Clerk, holding elections at the high school is currently the only viable option in which legal requirements of polling locations are met. While schools are not required to be closed, the town of Cape Elizabeth has routinely requested that our schools be closed during the November elections in order to facilitate a safe and accessible voting process for both students and community members. The school department has always accommodated this request — as it is safest for our students. The problem occurs during primaries and local elections, when the numbers are smaller, but the students are still in session.

Due to the school’s association with Portland Arts & Technical High School, sending schools must not have more than five dissimilar school days. This presents a significant scheduling challenge in general and poses significant safety concerns for students at CEHS as the school remains open to the voters. As a result, the Town and School Department are actively pursuing alternatives and/or modifications that will ensure student safety when school is in session. During the upcoming 2019 November elections, additional local law enforcement officers will be stationed and barriers installed within the school in order to run a “dress rehearsal” in preparation for future elections which coincide with a regular school day.

POLICY:

The policy committee met on September 24th to review updates to the following policies:

AC – Non-Discrimination/Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action
ACAA – Harassment and Sexual Harassment of Students

ACAB – Harassment and Sexual Harassment of School Employees

ACAD – Hazing – in this policy we added the final clause at the end of the second paragraph.

The committee considered edits to policies AC, ACAA, and ACAB to include the addition of the term “gender identity and expression” to include coverage of this classification in the policies. Also in Policy ACAA the committee considered adding language to expand the parties who may investigate complaints to include any school Administrator.

In the ACAD Hazing Policy, the current policy includes the statement that “Injurious hazing also includes any hazing activity that is expected of a student as a condition of joining or maintaining membership in a group that humiliates, degrades, abuses or endangers a student.” The committee considered the addition of the new clause “regardless of the student's willingness to participate in the activity” to this provision.

At the October 8th Regular Business meeting the School Board reviewed the above policies. The revisions were presented as part of a first reading therefore no vote or action was taken. These policies will be reviewed again at the next policy committee meeting.

This fall School Board also plans to review **Policies JLF - /JLF-R - Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting**, and **JLF-R - Child Abuse and Neglect**

Reporting - Administrative Procedure, as well as a new policy **JLFA - Child Sexual Abuse Prevention and Response**. Look for these policies on an upcoming policy committee agenda.

All policies are posted on the [CESD website](#) in the School Board section policy tab.

Policy committee meetings occur once per month and are open to the public, including students. *The next policy meeting is scheduled for **October 22nd at 3:00** in the Jordan Conference Room.*

FUTURE DATES:

- Tuesday, October 22nd, Policy Committee, at 3:00PM at Jordan Conference Room, Town Hall.
- Tuesday, October 22nd, School Board Workshop, Needs Assessment Facilities Study & First Building Committee Meeting, 6:30PM - 8:30PM, CEHS Library.

- Tuesday, October 29th, Needs Assessment Facilities Study Report & Public Meeting, 6:00PM - 8:00PM, Town Hall Chambers.

- Tuesday, November 5th, Building Committee Meeting, 6:30PM - 8:30PM, CEHS Library.

- Tuesday, November 12th, Regular School Board Business Meeting, 6:30PM - 8:30PM, Town Hall Chambers.