

# Cape Schools Open Minds and Open Doors

Community • Academics • Passion • Ethics

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## CAPE ELIZABETH SCHOOLS

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June 23, 2020

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the amazing staff who work for the Cape Elizabeth School Department for their outstanding work in handling the many challenges that the COVID-19 pandemic presented, from the quick switch to remote learning, to keeping our buildings safe; from preparing and delivering food to families to keeping in contact with students and families. While our plan was not perfect, staff remained flexible in their strategies and were dedicated to doing their best to educate and care for our students.

The Administrative Team spent some time last week, in the midst of students returning devices and books to school, the great 8th grade parade, and teachers preparing their rooms for the summer, to reflect on our experience with remote learning and the many challenges we faced. At the top of the list for everyone was the dedication of our amazing staff, their creativity, and their commitment to our students. As we discussed things that we need to work on, items on our lists were improving our use of technology, developing consistent expectations around attendance, grading, engagement of students, and assessment. Plans for professional development and discussions in these areas will be developed.

For the past month the Administrative Team has met twice a week to begin to formulate plans for educating our students in the fall. We have brainstormed bussing, scheduling, sanitization, and many other topics in order to determine feasibility of plans and options that might work.

On June 26<sup>th</sup>, a District Planning Team made up of the Administrative Team, several School Board members and parents, teachers representing every school, a school psychologist, a representative from the Transportation Department, an administrative assistant, and our school nurses will meet via ZOOM to begin to review the options presented by the Administrative Team and to analyze other options that might surface. This will be a recommending team who will study the work of the Administrative Team, review new ideas, and develop a plan for 100% remote learning, as well as a plan for a hybrid of in-school and remote learning, our two viable options at this point. The implementation of any plan will be dependent upon the Governor's orders which we know can be decreed, and then changed at any time between now and school opening.

The parent and staff surveys that were administered early this spring showed strong support for getting our students back in our schools. This will be an expensive endeavor as we work to follow CDC recommendations for social distancing, wearing face coverings, sanitizing our buildings, etc. We are committed to complying with these recommendations and to following the CDC's tool for making (re)opening decisions as we develop our plans. ([cdc.gov/coronavirus](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus))

I would like to thank Town Council for recognizing the financial impact of providing for these safety measures as we work to open our schools. The Council approved the school budget at their meeting on June 15, 2020 and the public will be asked to vote on the FY21 School Budget on July 14, 2020 at the Public Referendum. As reported at the Town Council meeting, the impact would result in the estimated difference in total taxes for a \$300,000 home from FY 2020 to FY 2021 of \$54.00, an increase of \$.18 on

every \$1,000. Support of the proposed FY21 School Budget is crucial to the re-opening of our schools. Please remember to vote on July 14. Absentee ballots are available.

Stay well, and have a wonderful summer.

Sincerely,

Donna H. Wolfrom