

Cape Schools Open Minds and Open Doors

Community • Academics • Passion • Ethics

CAPE ELIZABETH SCHOOLS

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Today, June 4, was a first in Cape Elizabeth. Principal Shedd, Vice Principal Carpenter, Tom Kohan, David Galvan, and David Brown along with tremendous organizational power from Pat Fowler and many volunteers from Project Graduation, went by school bus to every senior's home for a special delivery. As a surprise, they dropped off a cap and gown and gave a virtual high five to every senior. Another sign of adapting to life during the Coronavirus is witnessing the signs lining the road along Town Hall with each student's name. There are also traditions that have withstood the virus. The famous painted rock on 77 is now covered in handprints from seniors, orchestrated with social distancing in mind.

As we drive around town and see the support and some of the ways we are honoring our seniors, we are also a nation in pain over the killing of George Floyd and the oppressive, systemic racism that continues today. We are hurting from the stories of fear and loss being shared by people of color. We are witnessing, yet again, another uprising and call for justice, equality, and understanding. At the forefront of many conversations is "Black Lives Matter", talk of working together to root out racism, bigotry and hate. This conversation must continue and the justice being called for is long overdue.

We need to continue working as a district to actively bring anti-racism to our Cape Elizabeth schools, making commitments to show that we recognize the inequities in our country and we are willing to actively be a part of the shift that brings greater equality to people of color. This work is essential to recognizing that we are all part of the whole and when some of us suffer, we all suffer. We need to continue to provide anti-racial training for faculty and strengthen our curriculum to bring more voices of color to the conversations. If we truly believe in "Open Minds, Open Hearts", then now is the time to make a clear proclamation that we stand by **all** of our students and families regardless of the color of their skin.

I believe the students graduating from Cape Elizabeth High School this year have the compassion and leadership to make changes and to help heal our country of wounds that were inflicted hundreds of years ago. I believe that there is an opening right now and our graduates will fill that opening with change and hope. The world is challenging them to understand our differences and celebrate our unique individuality as valuable parts of the whole. Cape Elizabeth seniors are prepared to engage and have their voices be heard. They have received their gowns, will be honored in a graduation in August and will lead us into a future that lifts people up, regardless of skin color, and be the change that is needed. Congratulations to the class of 2020! May you take on the world with your hearts, passion and acceptance for all!

Budget Update:

COVID 19 has had a major impact on the FY21 CESD budget. While our bottom line numbers have not changed, what we will need for our teachers and students has changed quite a bit.

Our goal is to get students back in the classrooms with their teachers, but we have to do it safely, and that is going to be costly. There are multiple scenarios and contingency plans in the works. Everything depends on the structure of our reopening plan, and what happens throughout the school year.

At this time, the predicted additional cost for reopening Cape Schools, following CDC guidelines, is roughly \$275,000. A few examples of additional expenditures include: personal protective equipment, such as masks for staff and students; increased custodial services and supplies for sanitization; plexiglass barrier installation in certain spaces; additional bus runs/routes. We will also continue to deliver food to our students in need throughout the summer and into next school year whenever distance learning is in place.

Where will this money come from? The School Board has not changed the FY21 budget to request tax payers raise additional funds to cover these COVID 19 related costs. There is also a real concern that the State of Maine may curtail school revenue, so we have to prepare for that scenario as well. The Superintendent and administrators will work within the budget to absorb those necessary costs, but that means cuts elsewhere in the budget. Examples of how they might do that include: freezing spending on books and supplies, deferring some maintenance projects, leaving some staff positions unfilled, pausing programs for a year, possibly restricting bus service to K-8 students only, and possible staff furlough days.

We have qualified for approximately \$23,000 through the CARES Act for FY20 COVID 19 related costs. The Superintendent and business manager are doggedly researching and applying for any and all grants for FY21.

As a reminder, the School Board requested over half a million dollars in cuts to the original request budget before approving it and presenting it to the Town Council in late April. The Board lowered expenditures significantly and was able to increase revenues as well. The Board believes this budget reflects the community's commitment to excellence in education and obligation to meet the needs of all students while working within this difficult and somewhat unpredictable financial atmosphere. The combined total tax impact, town and school – what a citizen actually will see on their tax bill – is .9%. An updated pro forma with this information, prepared by the town manager, is available on the town of Cape Elizabeth website.

The citizen referendum vote on the school budget is scheduled for July 14, 2020. Please vote!

If you would like to learn more about the CESD budget, please go to the school department website and click on the budget link.

Upcoming meetings:

6/15 - 7:00 pm - Town Council Special Meeting to Adopt the School Budget via Zoom

6/23 - 3:00 pm - School Board Policy Meeting via Zoom

7/14 - 7:00am-8:00pm - Election Day

Heather Altenburg
Cape Elizabeth School Board Chair
"Cape Schools Open Minds and Open Doors"