

Superintendent's Update

Wednesday, June 2, 2021

Today was the 156th day of the 2020-21 school year. We have 14 school days left this year. Just as a reminder, the last day of school is Monday, June 21 and this is a half-day for students.

This is a busy week in the district. Dedham High School will be celebrating graduation for the Class of 2021 at Veteran's Memorial Field at Stone Park at 11:00 AM on Saturday, June 5th. Last night was the annual "Class Night" complete with academic achievement awards presented by DHS Department Chairs and administrators. This event was held outside in order to allow attendance by family members and friends. Additional senior events are occurring during other days this week. The entire list can be viewed [HERE](#).

Despite this challenging pandemic-influenced year, at this year's Class of 2021 graduation, Dedham High School will be awarding 236 scholarships (40 more than last year) valued at more than \$229,000 (up \$50,000 from last year). There are 116 members of the senior class receiving at least one scholarship, representing an increase of 15 students. Many thanks to the DHS Scholarship committee (especially College/Career Counselor Ashley Mansfield and all the DHS Counselors) that invests a huge number of hours to equitably distribute these generous resources from the community.

Each year Dedham High School students submit videos for entry into the **National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences (NATAS) Boston/New England Chapter Student Production Awards** contest. This is the same group that awards Emmy's to industry professionals. (A description of the award is included below.) Hundreds of schools participate in this contest. Being nominated for an award is an honor, and winning an award is a privilege. *This year's nominees were just announced and Dedham High was nominated in 6 categories! This is the most nominations we have ever received. And, even more exciting, we won two awards! Junior, Hilan Miralda, produced a powerful PSA on the dangers of social media. It is a moving piece that is quite deserving of this recognition. And Sophomore Christopher MacDougall, produced a poignant news package on what it's like to be in school during a pandemic. Very informative and really well produced. Both students deserved this prestigious award!* The full list of the nominees can be found [here](#). **The list of DHS nominees can be found [here](#), and each one is linked to the nominated video.**

The NATAS Boston/New England Student Production Awards recognize outstanding student achievements in production by conferring awards of merit in the chapter's designated award region. The presentation of these awards is intended to be an incentive for the continued pursuit of excellence by those studying media and journalism and to focus public attention on outstanding cultural, educational, technological, entertainment, news and informational achievements by undergraduate college and/or high school students.

See below from Ms. Rocha, advisor of the [ECHO Magazine](#).

The staff of [ECHO Magazine](#) is happy to share this year's edition "Stories from a Strange Year." We especially want to thank all who contributed their writing and artistic talents to the creation of this year's magazine including Yoana-Marie Rodriguez, Colleen Kelley, Finn Radner, Olta Milosh, Erin Monahan, John Scaramuzzo, Ricky Spinello, Harlee O'Sullivan, Olivia Dignan, Isaiah Hill, Jada Gourdet, Grace Metcalf-Vera, Lauren Fonseca, and Elaina Dong along with the editorial staff Editor-in -Chief Leila Smadi, Assistant Editor-in-Chief Finn Radner, Colin Finkel, Isabella Annatone, and Christopher MacDougall.

As the Committee is already aware, the DHS Performing Arts Company recently aired the full release of their METG Drama Festival production of MacBeth on Friday, May 28th at 7:00 PM. You can view the production [by clicking on this link](#). For those of you who would like to see other shows presented in the METG Together Festival please see the schedule and [this link](#) containing the names and productions of all of the high schools in

Massachusetts who submitted videos this year - Dedham is on Friday the 11th. CONGRATULATIONS to Ms. Whittemore and the entire Performing Arts Company on their riveting production!

As the Committee is aware, DESE posted new [K-12 Graduation/Commencement Guidance](#) and [Updated COVID-19 Guidance](#) on Friday, May 28. I sent a [DPS Update](#) containing this information to all faculty, staff, and families on Monday, May 31. The major takeaway from these updates was that starting next fall all districts and schools will be required to provide in-person, 5 days per week instruction. Remote instruction will not be allowed as a standard learning model in the 2021-22 school year.

This week Dedham Middle School will be giving all students the ELA and Math MCAS assessments. These will be conducted on Chromebooks for all students. This is a massive undertaking with 650 students being assessed in ELA and Math, and 8th graders also completing Science/Technology assessments. It will be a busy week at DMS.

In addition, this week our elementary school students who have continued with fully remote learning will be completing their MCAS assessments in ELA and Math. These will be done entirely remotely and online, while monitored simultaneously by their remote instruction teachers. This has never been attempted before, and all districts are struggling with how to do this in an equitable/fair manner. We have about 30 students (total) in grades 3-5 who are currently still fully remote and participating in this testing.

On Thursday, May 27 I attended (virtually) the annual [Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents annual Spring meeting](#). The focus of this conference was the work underway to advance racial equity, diversity and inclusion in the Association and our districts. Much of the discussion focused on the recently released [MASS Racial Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Strategy](#). It was clear that this work is a priority in school districts across the state and at the state/DESE level, and I was proud to share our work in Dedham with this group.

DPS Food Services Director Jeanne Johnson recently informed me that due to the majority of schools reopening around the country at about the same time it has put a strain on the suppliers that provide food to school food service programs. This has resulted in deliveries that have not shown up as scheduled and a large amount of products that are becoming more and more unavailable. All the parties involved are working as quickly as possible to remedy the situation. This may cause the need for last minute menu changes to the school lunch and breakfast meals that are served at our schools. We appreciate your understanding and patience as we work through this ever changing food market supply chain and get back on a consistent food availability track.

Finally, included in your folder is [an email from DESE](#) indicating receipt before the June 1 deadline of Dedham's decision to NOT participate in the school choice program in 2021-22.

I am happy to answer any questions the Committee may have.