

Superintendent's Update

Wednesday, April 6, 2022

Today was the 133rd day of classes for the 2021-22 school year. We have only 6 more days of school until our extended April vacation which begins on Friday, April 15 (Good Friday). Today was the final half-day for professional development during the 2021-22 school year. The schedule of professional development activities across the district can be found [HERE](#).

Much of our focus in the district has been on MCAS testing over the past few weeks. The testing schedule for the spring of 2022 is [HERE](#). The testing window opened with Grade 10 ELA tests on March 22, followed by ELA Session 1 testing for grades 3 & 4 on Monday and Tuesday of this week. The entire middle school will be testing this Thursday and Friday, completing both Session #1 & 2 on those days. All tests are full length this year (unlike last year when tests for Grades 3-8 were only half length), and all testing is completed online using Chromebooks. So far, the early returns are that the Grade 3 ELA assessments took longer than expected, but there were no real problems with test administration across the district. Gr. 3-5 ELA Session #2 will take place next week. Math MCAS testing for all students (2 sessions) will begin during the first week of May followed by Science MCAS testing for Grade 5, 8, and 9/10 in late May and early June.

Most schools have been having assemblies during the past two weeks with all students to go over the logistics and preparations for MCAS testing. I attended all three grade-level assemblies at Dedham Middle School to speak with students from each grade yesterday about the exam and its importance not only for individual students but also for the school, the district, and the overall community of Dedham. These students have not taken a "traditional" full-length MCAS exam since 3 years ago (spring of 2019). There were no tests given for any students during spring 2020 (full lockdown), and partial tests given for grades 3-8 last year (spring 2021) due to the interrupted nature of schooling (partial weeks in person + remote learning) for all students. This year's exam (2022) will be used as a baseline for comparison in future years to determine student growth.

On Monday, March 28 members Budget Subcommittee Chair Victor Hebert and Chair Tracey White accompanied Central Staff members to present the [School](#)

[Department's FY23 Budget](#) to the full Finance Committee. I am very proud of our work in assembling this year's budget, and the fine work of Sara Erickson in making this document tell a compelling story both visually and with dialog. I believe the FinCom appreciated our work also. It was clear that the overall FY23 budget outlook for the town is quite tight, and I have been asked to prioritize our request and identify possible cuts that may be needed based upon the Finance Committee's recommendation. The District Leadership Team will be meeting next week to discuss possible areas of reduction in the event this becomes necessary, and once the Finance Committee's deliberations have concluded, they will make a recommendation that becomes their advise to Town Meeting in the warrant. If any FY23 reductions are necessary, we will meet with the Budget Subcommittee to determine how and where these cuts will land.

The last two weeks have also been very busy with administrative search committees. Each day this week we are hosting full day site visits in the district with the 4 finalists for the position of Assistant Superintendent for Student Services. I expect this search to wrap up next week. As the Committee is aware, Jenny McGowan was recently appointed as the permanent Principal at Greenlodge Elementary School, and the recent retirement announcement by Avery Principal Clare Sullivan will require additional planning and work to fill that position. Unfortunately, our recent search for a successor to HR Administrator Kathy O'Leary has come up empty because our chosen candidate backed out last week. We are restarting that search next week. Updates and timelines with important milestones for these positions are listed below:

[Assistant Superintendent for Student Services](#)

[Assistant Superintendent for Business and Finance](#)

[Dedham Middle School Assistant Principal](#)

[Dedham High School Assistant Principal](#)

We have also been busy over the past few weeks integrating our new [ESD/ESY Director Alyssa Freda](#) to the district. She is present to discuss her entry to the district later in tonight's meeting. Alyssa has been working very hard to get to know everyone in the district and to better understand our current summer programming. She also worked very closely with Dr. Kelly on submitting a grant application to DESE for summer program fiscal support. We will hear back about this funding request in the next few months.

Our district COVID Coordinator Emily Kadehjian has continued her hard work each week conducting over 1200 pooled tests across the district. In addition Emily has begun to try and recoup some costs sustained by the district as a result of staff absences due to COVID. This state grant program requires considerable bookkeeping and tracking down of proof of positive tests, but so far she has done the necessary work to recapture more than \$70,000 worth of these costs. These reimbursements go directly to the Town of Dedham (not the schools) and we are working with Town Manager Leon Goodwin and Finance Director John Arnett to access these funds to offset our costs since Emily has done the hard work to obtain these state reimbursements.

Congratulations are in order to the Class of 2022 and the DHS Performing Arts company on their production of *Hairspray* at DHS on March 25-28. The production was a huge success and widely attended. I for one found the acting, costumes, music, and lighting very professional and the content was hilarious.

During the “old business” portion of the meeting I will be asking the Committee to vote to approve the summary of our [SOA \(Student Activity Act\) funding allocation for FY22](#). This is supplemental funding for schools similar to Chapter 70 funding that was given to all districts across the state. This was presented at our last meeting on March 16 with the expectation that the Committee would vote to approve these resources tonight.

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