

From the Office of the Superintendent of Schools

Many years ago I was at a meeting near the center of town. One of my children wanted to walk home because he didn't want to wait. We were just starting to let him have independent experiences, so I let him walk down the Shore Road path to our house. After I let him go on his way, I received a text from an acquaintance in the community saying that she saw him walking alone and did I know this. She asked if I wanted or needed her to pick him up and bring him home.

Some may see this gesture as meddling, but I see it as the true sense of community, an example of the old adage, "It takes a village to raise a child."

Community is one of the reasons that Cape Elizabeth is such an amazing and wonderful place to raise a family. Within our schools, volunteers have always made Harvest Festival, Book Fairs, Arts Day, and the Festival of Curiosity possible. The effort that is put into Project Graduation by parent volunteers in order to gift the graduating class an amazing send off is a true testament to how much we care.

The connection and passion does not stop with our schools and families though. We have a very vibrant and rich Historical Society, a dedicated group that cares for Fort Williams, from the landscape to the tourism aspect, and a prominent Land Trust organization that cares to preserve the natural beauty of this beautiful Cape. We have amazing working farms that are supported and appreciated by so many citizens of this town. We have dedicated local businesses like Tamaro Landscaping, LP Murray, and CSalt. These are just a few examples, but there are many more institutions within our community that we all count on and appreciate.

It is clear that community is strong here in Cape Elizabeth. It is clear that community matters and is a huge part of what draws people to live here and stay here. My husband is a K-12 graduate of Cape Elizabeth. He is not alone. Many graduates have returned to Cape Elizabeth to raise their families because of the natural beauty, schools, and the strong sense of community.

These past few months I have been prouder than ever to live in Cape Elizabeth. Through many meetings, emails and conversations, I have witnessed the dedication of our administrators and teachers and seen the passion from parents. I have seen courage, strength and so much positive intention from people to offer the best they can.

This pandemic is putting community to the test. In a time when we are told to stay apart, we need each other more than ever. We need to come together and tap into our strong community. And so it is in this spirit that I am making this request and ask.

As a result of the Covid-19 there are more safety measures. One of these, that is familiar to all of us, is social distancing. On our school buses, we will be spreading students out to meet

guidelines and to assure safety. The district is hiring bus monitors to assure that students maintain the social distance and safety guidelines. It is a way to do our best to be as safe as possible. Currently we have one monitor hired and need many more.

Another safety precaution is asking teachers to stay home when they feel the slightest sign of illness. Teachers are a hearty bunch and they will power through. Under current guidelines, however, they will have to call in sick if they feel the slightest cough or sniffle. As a district, we anticipate more need for substitute teachers.

So this is where I come back to community. We are amazing. We can do things. We have done things. We have raised money to build a turf and a Pond Cove playground. We have an incredibly supportive foundation in CEEF, a clear demonstration of a community that cares. I am asking you, urging you, to reach out and offer your time if you are able. Sign up to be a bus monitor. Sign up to be a substitute. Let's work together and be there for each other by lending a helping hand, as we have done so many times before.

If you are interested in either of these opportunities, you can contact Arlene Rochefort, the district's Human Resources Coordinator, at <mailto:arochefort@capeelizabethschools.org>, for more information. Offer your time and energy, if you are able, to help keep our schools going for our students and families. Let's pull together yet again and do something great for each other as a strong, caring and dedicated community.

Thank you,
Heather Altenburg
School Board Chair