

**Cape Elizabeth School Program
1992-2015
23 years**

Annual Report 2014-2015

Submitted by Gail Schmader, Volunteer Coordinator



Oliver's artwork showcases the 3rd grade study of texture and depth in Maine artists' seascapes

Over **1,000* volunteers** - parents, grandparents, students, community members - provided academic and social/emotional support for Cape Elizabeth's 1,650 students. These volunteers donated approximately **\$320,000**** to our school system through a minimum of **21,000** hours of service. These service hours are the equivalent of **16***** staff positions. Approximately 60% were parent volunteers; 20% were community members and grandparents; and 20% were students.

** These figures do not include the many hours of volunteer support from parents' associations, extracurricular, and booster club activities at all three schools.*

***Value of volunteer service hour: average of minimum wage and Independent Sector value of volunteer time*

**** Based on 7 hours/day for 180 days*

Volunteers

Volunteers provided a wide range of support for the Cape schools. Every student and staff member was touched in some way by a volunteer effort.

Many long-time Cape Elizabeth residents supported the third and fourth grade 250th Cape Celebration authentic research projects. These volunteers guided students on field trips around Cape, giving them the historical significance of each site. Some spoke to the students in their classrooms about farming, fishing, lighthouses, shipwrecks, schools, recreation, and the founding of Cape Elizabeth. Students interviewed others.

Several community members supported the robotics program. They enthusiastically helped students challenge themselves to create and refine their robotics projects. These committed volunteers helped make the program possible.

Through countless hours of service, volunteers supported a variety of special academic and enrichment projects in each school including: Arts Day at Pond Cove School, the Career Explorations Fair at the middle school, and the TEDx event at the high school.

A few high school students acted as teaching assistants in some of the math and science classes. They focused on providing extra help to individual students.

Student literacy was especially well supported this year. Two senior community members patiently and quietly met with several individual first grade students each week. They helped the students with literacy development including reading and writing activities. One of the volunteers states:

"Reading opens the world for someone. I like giving any help I can give to make reading easier for children. I enjoy opening up possibilities for them."

One community member was a volunteer in a first grade classroom for the fourth consecutive year. The teacher comments:

"He worked one-on-one and in small groups with students to help support literacy skills taught. He accompanied the class on field trips, and at the end of the year, he taught the whole class about lighthouses. He does whatever's needed. He's a gem!"

Twelve volunteers provided strong support for a class of sixth graders who were working on their Egyptian research projects. The volunteers held individual writing conferences with all students to help them fine-tune their reports.

Volunteers were critical for the success of the middle school weeklong, hands-on writing workshop directed by the "Telling Room" staff in the fall. They were also critical for the resounding success of the "Cape Celebrates Literacy" week in the spring.

Community members and parents provided invaluable support in the Pond Cove Media Center. They helped with circulation, shelving, processing and repairing materials, and assisting students with book selections and research materials.

Betsy Moir, a community member who has volunteered faithfully in the Cape schools for twenty-three years, relishes the challenge of filling class book Media Center requests for specific academic units as well as making sure the stacks are well organized. All volunteers in the media center eagerly helped with a variety of literacy projects in addition to helping with the daily circulation and shelving. A senior volunteer comments:

"It's a real joy sharing (in the media center) not only for the opportunity to do something useful, surrounded by the brimming vitality of the kids, but for the opportunity to visit with the Pond Cove staff -- great professionals and real people."

Another senior community volunteer has supported the high school physics program for the past seven years. Physics teacher, Dr. Michael Efron comments:

"I have had one amazing volunteer all year -- Bill Gross. As in previous years, Bill comes in three days out the high school's four-day rotation. He is presently tutoring twenty-one students from physics classes. I have come to depend on his assistance. There is one student who he has tutored all year -- who has gone from one of the neediest in the class to the highest grade on the last test. Bill is terrific!"

During National Volunteer Week in April, volunteers were offered "thank you" packets of flower and vegetable seeds when they signed-in at each school. One hundred and fifty packets of seeds were distributed.

"Some sacred seed lurks in each human personality, no matter how lowly its origin on earth; to give every such seed the deepest possible roots and the highest possible flowering is in the vision and hope of those ideas of freedom and discipline which constitute the American dream."

Carl Sandburg

Tangible Resources

The community donated a wide range of tangible resources, valued at over **\$8,000**, through the volunteer program. This figure does not include the many classroom supplies donated on a weekly basis throughout the year.

Pond Cove School received large donations of Legos and board games for use during indoor recesses, generous "rainy day" clothing donations for the health office, many donations of books for the Media Center, and a wide variety of arts and craft supplies for the art program and classroom projects including the 250th Cape Elizabeth Celebration.

The middle school received many small but invaluable donations. These included musical toy instruments, board games, and a CD player for the Instructional Support program, fire-retardant chairs and a rug for a classroom reading center, and Legos, magnets, metal puzzles, and small toy cars for science and math experiments/projects.

Both Pond Cove School and the middle school continued to receive large donations of tennis balls. The balls are used to "quiet" student chair and desk legs and to protect the classroom floors. The balls are cut and installed by the custodians.

High school donations included: mountain/trail bikes, fishing rods, reels and tackle, and sets of golf clubs for the Phys. Ed. adventure program.

Items donated by community members were often made by people who wouldn't ordinarily be connected to the schools. Most of these people responded to "ads" posted on CETV. It was an excellent opportunity for good conversation, fostering a positive connection between the school and the community.

School Mentor Program

Thirty-five high school mentors provided support for Pond Cove and middle school students. Most mentors met one-on-one with their mentee, focusing on their social/emotional and academic needs. Some mentors acted as classroom helpers, supporting students as needed. Others acted as role models for students on the playground, fostering cooperative, inclusive, fair play and teaching playground games to first and second graders.

High school teacher, Courtney Ferrell, continues to be a crucial link in the mentor program. As a teacher advisor for the high school Volunteer Club, she is the primary recruiter for mentors.

Matching a mentor with a mentee is a multi-faceted process. With permission and input from parents, students and teachers request a mentor. The volunteer coordinator meets with the teacher to discuss the student's needs and interests, along with the challenging issue of scheduling. High school students are available during their study/free periods, which rotate at different times on a four-day schedule.

The volunteer coordinator then starts the recruiting process by contacting Courtney Ferrell and/or past mentors. Once a mentor is recruited, the coordinator meets with the mentor individually to discuss the program guidelines, strategies for relating to students, and specific tips for working with the assigned mentee. Activities are suggested and a schedule is made. The coordinator and the mentee's teacher check in frequently with the mentor.

Many of the mentors, who met with their mentees forty minutes once a week, provided reinforcement or enrichment for math and literacy skills. Mentors played math games and practiced number facts. They helped with comprehension, oral fluency and decoding skills in reading development, and helped organize the students' thoughts so they could put them into sentences and paragraphs.

Mentors learn to make good choices and to become caring, responsible adults. They increase their self-confidence, their ability to take risks, and their resiliency. They learn to set boundaries and to embrace diversity. Being a mentor encourages the high school students to stretch and challenge themselves through the unique opportunity to do meaningful service. Mentors commented:

"I could definitely see progression in his friendship with people, constantly saying 'hi' to just about everyone who walked by."

"I love seeing all my buddies every week."

"The student I work with is an incredibly kind and fun kid. It's a joy seeing him each week. I think we are really starting to connect."

"My student is really coming along."

A mentee comments:

"I can't wait to see my mentor every week. I try to do better school work to impress him. On a scale of 1-10, my mentor is an 11!"

A teacher comments to her student's mentor:

"You've done such a good job mentoring, that he's ready to spend his recess/lunch with his friends."

Mentors gained as much as their mentees. Trish Brigham, mother of three mentors states:

"Without exception, my children have immensely benefited from their experience. They have grown as individuals; developed kindness and empathy; learned the importance of confidentiality and the value of individual differences, and gained self-confidence."

Mentor relationships are low-key interventions for students. The caring, committed high school mentors make positive differences in the lives of kids.

"It only takes one—one person, one unexpected possibility, one ordinary moment of insight to create a life-changing experience."

Because you Believed in Me by Marcia A. McMullen and Patricia M. Miller

Rights and Safety of Students

As a safeguard to uphold the rights and safety of students, all volunteers are required to attend one Volunteer Awareness Session. Fourteen sessions were held during the year. There were 92 participants this year. These numbers have been steady for the last five years. The sessions focus on confidentiality, building evacuation, appropriate physical

contact with students, and sensitivity to students with learning challenges. Special attention is given to the volunteer's role in health emergencies, particularly for any student with a life-threatening allergy.

All school volunteers are required to successfully complete the following before volunteering:

- Criminal Record Check - There is no cost to the Town of Cape Elizabeth. Fingerprints are not required. Currently 1157 parents and community members have completed a Criminal Record Check. Two hundred checks were processed this year.
- Annual Volunteer Registration with confidentiality statement and confidential background information
- Attendance at one Volunteer Awareness Session
- Volunteer Application - This is only required for community volunteers without children in the schools. It includes a request for references.

Presenters/performers who work with a staff member present are exempt from these volunteer requirements.

All volunteer forms are available on the Cape Elizabeth school web site, with a link to the volunteer coordinator's site. The Volunteer Guidelines, the Staff (including volunteers) Conduct with Students Policy, and the Volunteer Program Annual Report are also posted on this site, as well as specific volunteer opportunities and requests for tangible items.

Parents complete the Volunteer Information Form on-line through the parent PowerSchool portal for their student. Parent data is recorded on their student's PowerSchool record. Teachers and administrators can access a PowerSchool report, which gives the status of each parent's volunteer requirements.

Conclusion

Volunteers are one of the many strengths of the Cape Elizabeth School System. They support the staff and students in a wide variety of student-centered programs.

"We value the connections among our school, local, and global communities that foster meaningful participation in a dynamic and diverse world."

Cape Elizabeth School Mission, Vision and Values Statement