



RIDGEFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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Susie Da Silva, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

May 15, 2020

Dear Families and Faculty,

The warmer weather is upon us, and with it comes a rejuvenation of spirit. Many of us experience how the spring air can positively change our feeling or mood. Our 'school' environment will require an added level of commitment on these beautiful days, and with that, I also hope students benefit from taking a break by sitting on the back deck or warm grass.

Today marks five weeks until our High School Seniors graduate. We look forward to celebrating this special day with our students. Let us cheer for them each day, and when you drive by the graduation banners (seen here) across Ridgefield, don't forget to honk your horn!



Be well, and stay safe.

Warmly,

Susie

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COVID-19 and Other Items

Board of Education Meeting

For those of you that were not able to catch our Board of Education meeting from this past Monday evening, you can find the video [here](#). A significant portion of the agenda focused on scenario planning for summer school and the 2020-21 Budget. Our next Board of Education meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, May 26, 2020.

Personal Items Pick-Up

School and Central Office staff have been meeting to discuss procedures/protocols for staff, students, and teachers to return to our buildings to retrieve personal items, as well as return materials. As soon as a schedule is finalized, your Principals will reach out to you.

Graduation Events

Last evening, Dr. Cardona, Commissioner of Education/Department of Public Health issued guidance (click [here](#)) with respect to graduation events. As of the date of this memo, we are expected to follow Executive Order 7x which does not allow gatherings greater than 5. Dr. Cardona has indicated that this guidance could possibly change, however, we would only hear about changes in mid-June. In a coordinated conference call this morning with Dr. Rich Melchreit from the Department of Public Health,

Dr. Cardona and Superintendents, it was indicated that summer graduation events would likely not allow gatherings far greater than what is allowed in Executive Order 7x.

Now that we have this information, we will look to finalize our plans to recognize and honor our students. We will then need to receive appropriate approvals from our local health department. Thank you for your patience, I know that this has not been easy.

Summer School

As of the date of this memo, we have not received official guidance with respect to Summer School programming. The CSDE indicated that guidance and requirements will be sent to districts upon the Governor's approval. Similar to graduation events, all decisions made on summer school programming for Ridgefield will need to be approved by our local Health Director.

Re-Opening Committee

As communicated at the Board of Education meeting on Monday, May 11, we will be establishing a Re-Opening Committee. This committee will be charged with planning for the reopening of schools. The committee will invite District-based educators and officials, as well as community members to collaborate on the various scenarios that may need to be considered for fall 2020. This committee is expected to establish 'buckets' of focus and will diversify within its focus groups. We believe that collaboration and partnership in this work is critical as we move forward. The Commissioner of Education indicated this morning that districts will have requirements for fall reopening. Like summer school, the Commissioner is awaiting the Governor's approval.

SAT

The CT SAT Day for Juniors has been moved to the fall for those who were not able to take it this spring. You can expect to hear more in June once we finalize dates. For more information on the CT SAT, please click [here](#).

eLearning

Our eLearning experience is continuing to grow, and we continue to reassess across all levels. We are proud of the [growth and flexibility of our faculty, students and families](#).

You can find updates on Twitter *Twitter: @RPS_DaSilva*, Instagram *Instagram: rpssuper*, [RPS News](#), and of course on our new Podcast, click here: [Ridgefield Tiger Talk, with Dr. Deeeeeesantis](#). Thomas Grace, the Assistant Principal of East Ridge Middle School is the guest. In this episode, they talk about how the middle school model works, teacher collaboration, modern challenges, and many other topics.

SRMS Administration offered after school ‘**catch-ups**’ with students this week by grade level to allow students to virtually check in with administrators and counselors to share what is going on and how virtual school is going so far. A wonderful opportunity for students and staff to connect again to share updates!

The Elementary “Kindness Challenge” is on!

BES - Click [here](#) to see Mr. Margolus’ new haircut

RES - Click [here](#) to see Mr. Palladino’s new haircut

SES/BMES - Click [here](#) to add an act of kindness to Ms. Weirsman’s challenge

[ERMS Virtual Morning Show Launch: Find it here](#)

FY 2020-21 BOE Budget Update

On May 12, the Board of Selectmen made a non-binding recommendation to the Board of Finance on the Board of Education FY 2020-21 Operating Budget of a 1.5% increase over the current year’s budget. Our Board of Education approved FY 2020-21 budget is an increase of 3.96% over our current year budget. Our budget was created with a few assumptions, such as utility prices, enrollment, staff turnover, as well as Excess Cost Reimbursement (ECR).

The foundation of this budget is based on the District's Mission and Vision of the Graduate. In addition to these priorities, we maintained respect for class size guidelines, and educational structures to support growth for all students. In addition, we honored our commitments to our contractual obligations with the five collective bargaining agreements and State and Federal Mandates all while keeping costs contained.

When we built our budget, our deliverables were to maintain current level of staffing, deliver on the one-to-one technology initiative, strengthen our safety and security initiatives, and complete the many facilities projects. It is always our goal to work collaboratively with the Town in any

way we can. We respect the difficulties and struggles of the Town and community. It is also up to us to advocate on behalf of the needs of our students. The Districts mission is to provide engaging, relevant, and personalized learning so all students can pursue their interests and prepare for life, learning, and work as a global citizen. We will be offering further direction to our budget process on Monday, May 18, 2020, at the Board of Finance Public Hearing and then again on Wednesday May 20, 2020, when we discuss details at the Board of Finance meeting.