

Message to CSD 13 Parents & Guardians:

4-29-18

“Hi All! I hope this note finds you and your family well!

It has come to my attention that the recently released Ad for the **Principal's** position at **DISHS** along with the projected maintenance budget for 18-19 has reignited some fears on **Facebook** that the decision has been made to close the high school. **This could not be further from the truth.**

It is discouraging to me that this fear would reignite when the board and I have put in a large amount of time and effort into sharing information and putting in a transparent process and timeline for this important decision to be investigated and brought back to the board and then to the voters in Deer Isle and **Stonington**. Sadly, not a single question has been asked directly by those who would spread this false assumption, when all they would need to do is either call my office and speak with me, contact Chair of the Board Jane Osborne or come to a board meeting and ask this and other questions directly.

As has been shared in information home to parents and guardians along with articles published in the paper, there is a Board subcommittee that will look at our future school structure. It will begin work in June and will be developing 2-3 of the best options for the structuring of our schools along with pros and cons of each and associated costs in a report. This report will go to the full Board at this December's Board meeting. January and February next year will be spent educating the public on the various options. Our plan at this time is to hold a public referendum in March 2019 (at the same time as town elections), so that the community can decide the outcome. I don't think the Board and I can be more transparent, honest and have developed a better plan than this going forward.

Because various options to be studied, including creating a K-12 school in the elementary school building, may result in a reduction in administration and/or a change in the kind of leader needed, the Board and I decided to be direct in our recruitment information while looking for applicants with the skills needed for the **DISHS** Leader we feel we need July 1st.

The reason the Board and I asked for a Transitional Leader is we are not sure where our district will be going and don't want to lie to someone who might be willing to take this job on, about what might be ahead. I will add that I can't with a good conscience ask people to apply if they don't know, that there is a very real possibility that the school could become either a K-12 School or that the high school could close with our sending students off island for high school. Having been fortunate to be a principal at all levels of public education, I know that a potential K-12 leader is a much different job and needs differing skills and strengths than the needs of a high school principal.

Concern has also been raised that since the Maintenance Budget for **DISHS** is not increasing dramatically that it proves we are already planning for the school to be

closed. **This also could not be further from the truth.** In the proposed budget, we have added a full-time Maintenance Assistant to help work with our Director of Maintenance on projects within each building. In the few years before I got here, our school buildings were not getting enough care and maintenance to them. Over the last two years we have taken some steps to catch up on some **of** the backlog of work. We will continue to do this for both buildings both this spring and next year. Next year no large projects are planned for **DISHS** because it would be foolish to do so with our future plan not yet completed or finalized. If approved, one large painting project is planned for **DISES** in the 18-19 Budget. There are also funds in the draft budget for materials to be purchased so that the new Maintenance Assistant will be working on needs at both buildings.

The board and I have worked extremely hard to get the word out that **this is not a done deal.** Meetings with Selectmen, articles in the paper, messages home have done their best to say a decision needs to be made, but that the decision has NOT been made. I need to add personally, having been brought in to help clean up and/or redevelop many difficult school situations in my career that I work hard to help take the school or district from where I find it to where it needs to go for the betterment of our students. **Through** the listening and involvement of many opinions, experiences and looking at present and future resources I have always helped the districts I work with move forward in the best direction possible in the best interest of our students. There is not one shoe, template, **pre**conceived plan, that works in each situation, as they are all different, including here in **CSD** 13.

We are still looking for parent representatives on the subcommittee mentioned above. Few people have shown any interest, but we will not give up trying to get more of you to be involved. Anyone who is interested should contact Jane Osborne, Board Chair, as soon as possible. If you have further questions or concerns about this process, I urge you to contact Jane Osborne. She is more than willing to talk to and/or meet with individuals or groups to discuss this issue. josborne@su76.org or 348.5274

On behalf of our district's students I hope that rumors such as these can be reduced in the coming days, weeks and months and that people will have more faith in the efforts of the school board and your superintendent. That when you read a **Facebook** comment or tweet, that before you spread something that could be false information that you ask more questions of your board members or of school administration and/or read and review the information that has been sent out or will be sent out in the future.

In closing, I would not say this if I did not believe it to be true, but I have not seen any inclination from any of our board members that a decision has been made. Each of them knows that the decision of Grades 9-12 education in **CSD** 13 will be a very difficult one to decide and so before it is made it needs the involvement of many as well as a lot more information collected.

The Board and I are committed to an honest process and plan and look forward to your commitment to the same honesty and to the process now in place in the coming months.

My best,

Christian M. **Elkington**
Superintendent School Union 76