

# SCHOOL UNION 76

BROOKLIN – DEER ISLE-STONINGTON CSD – SEDGWICK

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Office of the Superintendent

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*"Public Schools not only serve the public, they make the public"*

December 17, 2019

Dear Staff of Deer Isle-Stonington Elementary School:

You have successfully reached mid-December in another very busy year for all of us in School Union 76. From the perspective of many I hear from, from observations I have made and from the type of concerns that come to my desk today as compared to three-plus years ago, it is clear that much progress has been and continues to be made at DISES. For those of you who have put much time and energy into this work during this time and to those who have just joined us, your successful efforts can't be reinforced enough. I want to thank each of you for your many positive efforts both completed and in process!

I want to take a moment to update you on a couple of points, but first I am sharing a short article with you titled, **7 Things Children Wish Their Teachers and Parents Knew**. I believe it brings into focus some wonderful insights about our children from a teacher's perspective. I know if I could change the title to *7 Things Staff Wish Their Administrators, Boards and Community Knew* it would also be most relevant as it would be an important reminder of issues faced by school staff. However, I do believe that a considerable majority in our communities see the realities that you face each and every day and respect the work you do. I know that we must continue to recognize and understand the complexities of our shared-work so we can continue to help each one of our next generation be the best that they can be!

**Academic results in English Language Arts (ELA) are improving!** Over the last two-plus years you have worked hard to implement changes to our curriculum and instructional practices through focused planning, professional development and working more closely both at DISES and within SU 76. While making improvements you also developed a robust Intervention Program to help struggling students. Through your sustained efforts we are starting to see improved growth across multiple grade levels, as reflected in all three of our major assessment tools: NWEA Scoring, Fountas & Pinnell Benchmark Scoring and the Maine Educational Assessment. I hope you are pleased to see that our trends are going in the right direction as it recognizes that your efforts have started to make an evidence-based difference in our overall student success. Thanks go to the DISES staff for your multiple efforts in and out of our classrooms! Your willingness to look at alternative systems and curriculum, to work together, and to change instructional practices along with your patience and increasing trust has helped turn our ship in a positive direction.

**Your efforts in Math are starting to help crack our next big egg!** As you know, you have also been working since last spring to implement changes to our curriculum and instructional practices in Math. With immediate instructional changes needed, we investigated and chose to implement the Eureka Math Curriculum across grades K-8 this year. It is our hope and belief that this new curriculum will be

the base of improved learning in math, but alone it is not a panacea. It will need to be supported by long-term, planned professional development and math coaching along with using the lessons we have learned in making improvements to ELA instruction. Only through a similar approach to systemic, long-term efforts will our school's and students' math results also improve.

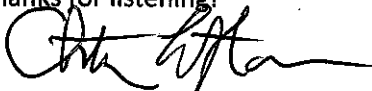
**By focusing on the whole child, including SEL, progress is being made!** Academic and SEL interventions go hand-in-hand to build a child's self-esteem. The stronger the belief and trust students have in you and in their own abilities, the more pride they have in what they know, what they believe they can do and what they will achieve! Helping to build a student's self-esteem not only comes from academic success, but is also being developed through Morning Meeting interactions, behavior interventions and through your use of caring and kind, actions and words. As our students continue to improve their abilities to learn it will help reduce many of their frustrations which can sometimes come out in negative behaviors within the classroom. Thanks to all for your positive efforts in supporting the whole child!

**Early Release Day adjustment.** Starting in January, if there is a one or two-hour delay on a Friday that we have Early Release we will now have school for the rest of the day like it is a Monday – Thursday, with buses leaving school by 3:00 pm. We will not be dismissing at the earlier time. Other districts in Hancock County have made this change finding that the school day is much more worthwhile for their students and so we will be making this same change. Hopefully, it will not need to happen very often.

In closing I know that for some words of appreciation and positive comments will only go so far. I know that some would rather see recognition and appreciation come in the form of a reduction of expectations, a slowing down of change, less being added to your plate or more staff being hired as to some that would be a recognition of both our needs and your positive work. Our administrators, Board and I wish we could do some of these things and maintain the progress we are seeing and our kids must have. The truth is, that no matter if our student results were where they need to be or were moving quickly in that direction, the reality of our field of work is much different. Since we work in one of the most complicated job fields where nothing is ever the same and money is always a concern, we must constantly adjust what we know and what we need to do. Education is very hard work and in reality, many people could not do what you try your best to do, each and every day.

As your Superintendent I understand the pressures and realities of your/our work. It is difficult and comes with many plusses and pressures. Please know I will continue to balance the overall needs of our students, you our staff and our communities by planning, suggesting and fighting for as many supports as possible. Thanks again for all of the positive efforts you make to support our students and fellow staff each and every day! I hope you and your family have an enjoyable break!

Thanks for listening!



Christian M. Elkington  
Superintendent of Schools SU 76