

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.”

Superintendent’s Memo

To: CSD Parents & Guardians
From: Christian M. Elkington
Re: The 2020-2021 School Year Begins!
Date: 9-6-2020

Over the last four weeks, CSD 13 Staff, in their various roles, have put much time and effort toward the successful reopening of our schools, by either going through Professional Development, serving on preparation committees or working to prepare our buildings. Over the last two weeks, staff have met in each school to develop and finalize new procedures, work on curriculum and complete added training, all in an effort to get ready for a beginning of school like no other. These efforts have been very determined, professional and focused as our staff wants to do the best job possible for our students, you our parents, for our communities and for each other! To say I have been impressed with the commitment, hard work and dedication I have seen, read and heard would be an understatement. **I am very proud to associate myself with the staff, work completed and in-progress in the CSD and within SU 76!**

I say in-progress purposefully, because there will be difficulties and problems that we don’t yet know about and cannot predict. These will happen not because of a lack of effort or planning, but because much of what we are and will be doing will be new. In each of my 35 years in education, in differing roles, I have always wanted more time to get ready for the first day, week and month of school. There are always items I wanted to be better at and more prepared for. This year is no different. Even by moving our first day to this Tuesday, September 8th there is still much to refine, equipment and supply back-orders to be delivered and items to get in even better shape. As I have shared with staff and now share with you, what is most important is not that every bell and whistle works perfectly, every supply has been delivered or every procedure and plan is pulled off without a problem. **Right now, what is most important for our students, parents and staff is for school to start as safely as we can make it so our kids get back together in school again with each other and with our staff!**

This is going to be a difficult year as we adjust to a new normal for at least the short-term. When I say difficult I mean really hard and trying. Not only will students and parents be adjusting to changes in many aspects of the day, so will our staff. They will not only be adjusting the way they work, but they will be adjusting their “craft”. Teaching

is a ‘craft’ that really good educators learn over years of effort and through trial and error. When they get good at it, it is not usually because of the equipment used, a book read or a special lesson taught. Staff become good because of the efforts they make to get to know, support and find ways to help their students learn. Under current circumstances, many of our staff will need to change some of their “craft”, the “best practices” they have used to meet students’ needs. They must do this in order to fit into the square instructional peg we have at this time. **This will be hard and will need everyone’s understanding as we go through some trial and error at times this year.**

I ask for your patience and understanding as we work through the difficulties that will come our first day, our first week and our first month. No matter if it is with transportation, technology, drop off & pick up, school meals or every other adjustment and change that we needed to make during the time of COVID 19, we will learn from the difficulties we experience. Before the US Navy puts a ship into use they give it a “shakedown” cruise, which lasts many, many weeks. Our district’s “shakedown” cruise begins when school starts this coming Tuesday. We plan for our preparations to work well the first time, but also understand that some will not. **Our cruise will continue based on progress or difficulty as we will adjust to get where our kids need to go.**

At this same time, I also need to let you know that our staff are very concerned that some of you, our parents, along with people in our communities will be quick to complain and place blame using Facebook, Twitter etc. Make no mistake, we need to be told directly about concerns or problems so they can be fixed. At the same time, we need every parent and community member to control the furor and emotion that sometimes comes, when we in school make a mistake or that is generated by negative comments and criticisms shared online. *Our staff is looking forward to working with our kids!* We will not be perfect no matter what we try to do or plan for, but we will try our best. Your understanding will help us use our energies to find solutions instead of wasting energy worrying about making mistakes. **Thanking each one of you in advance for your understanding!**

As mentioned not everything we have ordered or planned to have up and running is ready to go. Unfortunately, some of this delay is because supply lines around both the US and the world are having added delays from the Pandemic. Also, decisions made this past week by the USDA, Maine Dept. of Education and US Dept. of Education will mean more changes will need to be made over the coming weeks. All of this means we will need to adjust how we use technology and online applications, provide school meals, perform cleaning, you name it. **Flexibility is our middle name in 2020-2021.**

Even with all the difficulties we have encountered, we are in the best position we could be to start the 2020-2021 School Year. And I repeat, right now, what is most important for our students, parents and staff is for school to start this coming Tuesday, September 8th. By reducing risks our kids and staff will get back together in school again!

Thanks to everyone who has and is making this possible!

Thanks for taking the time to read the above!