

Sedgwick Elementary School

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Donald A. Buckingham, Ed.D., Principal

Lynnette Grindle, Administrative Assistant

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Dear Parents,

I hope our soggy summer isn't taking too much of a toll on your relaxation, recharging, and recreation time. I have recently returned from Northern Quebec where the weather was surprisingly good and the bugs and fish were plentiful. It was nice to be out of cell and e-mail range for an extended period of time. However, I'm glad to be back at school and looking forward to the coming school year.

Our custodians, Mac MacCauley and Thomas Allen have been hard at work cleaning and painting in spite of the damp weather. Their hard work will really pay off as we look towards the beginning of school. The gym floor will be refinished over the weekend and will be dry and cured within a week. The gym cannot be used until further notice. A generator has been installed for power outages and is on line. Computers have arrived, a new network infrastructure installed, and the updated lab is looking better already.

Work on our new greenhouse is continuing with ground work scheduled to be completed soon. This project, which is totally grant funded, promises to be an exciting addition to our program. It is our plan to use the greenhouse for instruction in science and nutrition, community service, and to help supply and supplement our kitchen. The construction will take place after the school year begins.

With my next letter, you will be getting copies of the Maine Educational Assessments (MEA) testing students in grades 3-8 took last March. I have recently received the results, but have not spent a lot of time interpreting them at this point. I'll have a full report to the school committee at their meeting in September. If you have questions about your child's results, please contact me here at the school.

Last year was the final year of the MEA. This fall, students will be taking the New England Common Assessment Program tests (NECAP). The NECAPs have been developed by Measured Progress, the same company that created the MEA, and will be shared with other New England states. They will be similar in style and format to the MEAs, but will be taken in October, rather than March. I'm sure there will be other differences as well. The Maine Department of Education decided to go with these tests as a way to save money.

Amy Grant is offering new afterschool program for students in grades K-8 on a daily basis at the Blue Hill Town Hall. The program will be 2 hours daily and cost \$20 per day. The schedule will essentially be an hour of snack and homework help followed by an hour of activities in art, drama, dance, visual arts, and music. Amy is very flexible with time and there are ways the school can help with the cost of attending if that is a problem. We are also looking at ways to get kids there, too.

The sign out front of the building really needs to be repainted. Is there a parent or community member out there who wants to head up a drive to have it re-done? This would be an excellent way to get involved with the school.

The Peninsula Early Childhood Education Center (PECEC) is now enrolling 3, 4, and 5 year olds for the Child Care and Head Start program. They offer USDA approved meals and snacks, parenting support, and health services, among other things. Child care subsidies are available and Head Start is free. Sedgwick children have priority over others for placement. Please visit the PECEC

classroom or call them at 359-2464 for more information or to receive an application. You can also visit them online at www.childandfamilyopp.org.

As we've been completing reports to the bureaucracy, I have to note that our percentage of absent and, especially, tardy students has grown. As a parent myself, I know how hard it is to get kids ready to come to school on time. However, when your children come in late, they are disrupting their education and the education of every student in their room. School starts at 7:55 and kids need to be here at 7:55. We are 'graded' in part on our percentages of absent and tardy children and I must monitor more closely those families who have chronic problems getting students to school on time. If your child is absent or tardy five times in any trimester, I will need to contact you to see if there is a way to improve attendance. As we look ahead to fall, please think about making sure your kids are here and on time every day.

Lynnette is in the office Tuesdays and Thursday morning from 8-12.

Between now and the 24th of August, I'll be in most days for varying periods of time--usually in the mornings. I'm also available by appointment. From the 24th to the 27th, I'll be in full time. The best way to reach me is via e-mail at my school address. I check school e-mail frequently at home.

It will be a goal of mine this year to work harder to involve and inform parents on issues facing kids, families, and the school. In addition to an open house with a bounce house (thanks to Anne Dentino's organizing) classroom teachers will hold informational meetings and I will be hosting nights to discuss specific topics. The first one will be on how best to live with your adolescent and/or pre-adolescent. Things really change once those hormones kick in and this is a good opportunity to talk with other parents about how they're dealing with changes.

I'd also like to get parent advice and comment on homework. That will be scheduled for sometime in October. It is my hope through these meetings to establish a better dialog on 'touchy' subjects, so that we can be guided better in the future. It takes parents, however, to come to these meetings if they are interested in having a say.

I spoke with a parent earlier today about beginning school Aug. 31, prior to Labor Day and Blue Hill Fair. When the board voted to do this last Spring they had to balance a late ending to the school year due to snow days against a potentially late start to the school year by starting after Labor Day. Most schools in the area have gone with an earlier start and an earlier end to the school year. Of course, there are people whose situation is impacted one way or the other and they will have strong feelings about it. This year I will survey parents prior to the establishment of the calendar by the board. One thing you can be sure of with calendar issues is that you can't make everybody happy. The best thing you can hope to do is make everyone equally unhappy.

Before I close, I want to publicly thank Jennifer Gray for her extraordinary work as the coordinator the yearbook. There is no question that this year's book was the best ever and that it happened only because Jennifer spearheaded the effort. She is a wonderful example of what involved parents can do to improve our school. Thank you, Jennifer.

Enjoy August. Let's hope for better weather.

Sincerely,

Don Buckingham

