



Committed to Excellence

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SUPERINTENDENT

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Dear Trumbull Families and Staff,

I want to start by thanking all of you for everything you have done to make this year successful to this point. We have all had to adjust to a new normal, which means change. Throughout this year, TPS has partnered with our families to navigate through the ever-changing COVID landscape to ensure success for our students. As we come ever closer to the end of the school year, please know that our commitment to our students and staff has never been greater. It is my personal goal to see that we finish the 2020-2021 school year in great fashion. That can only be accomplished through the hard work and cooperation of our families, staff, and students. If you ever need to connect with me directly, please email me at msemmel@Trumbullps.org.

To Mask or Not To Mask

My commentary about masks in this update is only related to TPS related activities. This past week has seen significant conversations and guidance around the necessity of wearing a mask while outdoors. Guidance from the CDC is in conflict with guidance from the Governor. Mask wearing inside our school buildings remains as a high-leverage, mandatory mitigation strategy for all students and staff. For anyone attending our outdoor sporting events, ceremonies, activities, we expect that you will have a mask and that you will wear it anytime that you are within 6 ft. of people you don't live with. For example, if you are watching an athletic event on the bleachers and you are surrounded by fans, you should all be wearing a mask. However, if you are by yourself way down the 1st baseline then wearing a mask is not necessary. Our goal for the end of this school year is to prevent cases, and therefore keep quarantines to a minimum so our students don't lose out on significant end of year events. We ask that you please work with us for this greater good.

Reopening Update

A number of families and staff (and myself, quite frankly) have wondered about Temporary Remote Learning for the 2021-2022 school year. Following state and federal law, current guidance indicates that Trumbull Public Schools will not be required to offer a voluntary remote learning option for the 2021-2022 school year. On Tuesday afternoon, I received a [joint statement](#) from the State Department of Education and the Department of Public Health that in part stated the following:

There is no current requirement under Connecticut or federal law that after the period of emergency this school year, school districts are mandated to provide all students voluntary daily access to remote learning at the unilateral request of the student/family. The requirement that school districts provide temporary remote learning opportunities for all parents and students provided in the Adapt, Advance, Achieve: Connecticut's Plan to Learn and Grow Together, and

Addendum 1, Temporarily Opting into Voluntary Remote Learning Due to COVID-19 will no longer be in place after this school year.

At this time, DPH and CSDE do not anticipate the need to mandate, due to public health necessity, that all school districts provide an option for students and their families to opt-in to a voluntary remote option after this school year.

In summary, currently both the SDE and DPH do not anticipate the need to mandate a remote option for 2021-2022.

As we receive additional information from the SDE and DPH, we will plan for a return to full, in-person learning in the Fall. Temporary Remote Learning will continue to be an option for the remainder of the 2020-2021 school year. If the remote option is not required, then TPS will no longer require half-days on every Wednesday for the coming school year.

THS Returns Full and In-Person

On Monday, April 26, Trumbull High School was proud to open its doors to all students for in-person learning. As the largest school in the district, and one of the largest schools in the State, this was no easy task. The team at THS did a great deal of preparation to make this happen and my appreciation goes out to everyone who had a hand in this work. As Principal, Mr. Guarino deserves a special thanks for leading the effort. I had a chance to be in the building earlier this week and the increase in positive energy was absolutely noticeable.

Budget Process

On April 21, the Board of Finance met and voted on the BOE budget. The BOF made no changes to the First Selectman's recommended increase of 3.0% for the BOE. As a reminder, the BOE unanimously passed a budget on February 9 calling for a 3.81% increase. However, the Board of Finance did mention at their meeting on April 21 that the BOE can use the surplus that we have from this school year to bridge the \$886,000 delta between the BOE adopted budget and the BOF recommended budget. There is a perfectly legitimate vehicle called a non-lapsing account, allowed by Connecticut General Statute [10-248a](#), that can make this possible. The BOE will need to be careful how surplus funds from 2020-2021 are used in 2021-2022 so that funding cliffs are not created for future budget years.

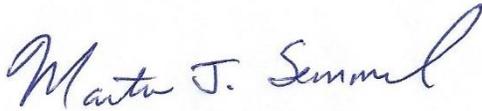
You may wonder, why does the BOE have a significant budget surplus this year? The BOE has benefitted from reduced costs in areas such as bus transportation, out-of-district placements, and athletics. For example, our bus contract allowed us to save over \$580,000 in bus transportation when school buses never ran. Furthermore, we have benefitted from a grant all districts received from the Federal Government called the Coronavirus Relief Fund (CRF). This approximately \$2.1 million grant allowed the district to purchase needed PPE, upgrade ventilation systems at many schools, and purchase free-standing student desks to allow for social distancing. This grant allowed us to off-set traditional recurring costs in our budget as well leading to budget surpluses. We will use a significant portion of our surpluses to right-size our Special Revenue Accounts and eliminate the significant losses in our Food Service account. As a side note, our Food Service program did turn a profit in March so we are excited to see how we can continue to reduce the Food Service deficit by the end of the year.

Calendar Update

At the BOE meeting on April 27, the BOE approved a new [2020-2021 Calendar](#) that extended the use of half-days on every Wednesday through June 16. While I know that these half-days can be very

challenging for some families, they have allowed our teachers to manage the work load from this very difficult year. As I mentioned earlier above, given that Remote Learning will not be a mandate for 2021-2022, we do not expect Wednesdays to be half-days for the coming school year. You can find the 2021-2022 calendar already adopted by the BOE [here](#).

Finally, I am truly excited to finish this year strong. Our teachers and administrators have received so much positive support from our families this year and that positivity has really had a profound impact. I look forward to a strong finish where we continue to support each other, engage in healthy dialogue, and ensure that all students benefit from the great partnership between our schools and our families.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Martin J. Semmel". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping 'M' and a long, sweeping tail on the 'l'.

Superintendent