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Dear Darien Community,

I know this has been a difficult week for our entire school community. I appreciate hearing from so many of you these past few days; your inputs and feedback are invaluable as we move forward together. In the coming weeks and months, we will be reviewing our district standards, policies, procedures and training for all school employees with the goal of identifying where we can make necessary improvements. I would also like to extend my gratitude to State Representative Tracy Marra for her work on legislation to enhance state disclosure laws regarding school employees. Modifying current law to require that districts be notified of arrests and investigations is essential to our mission of ensuring the safest possible learning environment for our children and the best way to prevent serious breakdowns in the hiring process. I would also like to recognize First Selectman Jon Zagrodzky who is working to bring our full State delegation on board and support the legislative change effort. I will share further updates as they become available.

FY27 BOE Budget

The Board of Education unanimously voted to approve the recommended FY27 budget of \$130,179,922, which is a 3.51% increase, and a Capital budget of \$1,915,550. The public hearing took place on Tuesday, February 3. If you are interested in viewing it, please use this [link](#). The budget public hearing begins at 12:34. The FY27 BOE budget will now be submitted to the town on March 3. The Board of Finance public hearing will be on Tuesday, March 10 and the BOF will discuss the BOE FY27 budget on March 31. The BOF vote will take place on Tuesday, April 7 and the RTM vote is on Monday, May 11.

School Counselor Week

In honor of National School Counseling Week, we are shining a light on the incredible impact of our school counselors. These dedicated professionals are instrumental in guiding our secondary students through their academic journeys and fostering their personal and social growth. Please join us in celebrating our school counselors for their profound dedication, empathy, and the vital role they play in helping every student thrive. They are:

- DHS: Cathy Ostar, Ann Branca, Debra Chase, Jennie Levin, Allison Longfellow, Lisa Messineo, Marc Power, Kaitlin Stanton, and Peter Trombley
- MMS: Emily Berezecky, Gregory Carnevali, Danielle Jenkins, Jaclyn Petrasanta, Samantha Vanleeuwen, and Casey Westcott

Kindness Week

The second week of February marks **Random Acts of Kindness Week** in our schools. Several of our schools are celebrating with activities that highlight the importance of kindness in our community. At DHS, the Wave Strong Club created a kindness video that will be shared with MMS students during Monday's Flex period. The Middlesex Parent Association is also sponsoring a community service project in which students will create centerpieces for the Mather Senior Center's Valentine's Day event. Across our elementary schools, students will participate in activities focused on kindness, including reading poems and stories, exploring ways to make others smile, and practicing self-kindness by identifying things that bring them joy. Please check your school's communications to learn more about the activities planned for the week. Our students are leading the way in showing how much of a difference one small act can make; we invite you to follow their example and spread a little extra light throughout our town this week.

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Mood Boosters Program

Yesterday at Tokeneke Elementary School we celebrated our final day of Mood Boost with a fun student tasting. Designed by chefs and dietitians for elementary and middle school students, the Mood Boost program featured interactive experiences, tasty new menus, fun characters, and take-home recipes that focus on six moods: Strong, Alert, Happy, Calm, Smart, and Confident and foods that can boost those moods and why. We have been highlighting Mood Boost recipes since December and yesterday's menu featured our Calm Moodie with a [recipe of Brown Rice and Lentils](#) as the base for a new taco bowl menu item at the elementary schools. Many students loved the new menu item and it will be added to the regular menu rotation.

Sweet Night of Jazz

The Darien music community is invited to enjoy an evening of live jazz at Sweet Night of Jazz, a special concert featuring student musicians from across the district. This unique concert will showcase three jazz ensembles from all three levels of Darien Public Schools. Each group will perform in a relaxed, simulated "jazz club" setting, and some sweet treats will be provided. Sweet Night of Jazz is open to the public, and all community members are welcome to attend and support Darien's student performers. The event will take place on Thursday, February 12 at 7:00 pm in the Middlesex Middle School Auditorium.

Byrne's Book Club

Join us at The Depot on Wednesday, March 18 at 7:00 pm. We'll be discussing *More Than Just a Game*, an insightful look at the high-stakes world of modern youth sports. It's a must-read for parents and coaches alike—hope to see you for the discussion!

Around Town

Get ready to putt your way through the stacks tomorrow from 8:00 am to 6:00 pm at the 11th Annual Mini Golf at the Darien Library. This beloved community tradition transforms the library into a whimsical, family-friendly course perfect for all ages. For more information and for tickets please click [here](#).

Students in grades 9 through 12 are invited to join Thriving Youth Darien on Monday, February 9 at 7:00 pm at Noroton Presbyterian for an interactive youth presentation on the 2025 Darien Youth Survey. Please click [here](#) for more information.

DHS Sports

It's going to be a high-energy weekend for our teams with plenty of action both home and away! The schedule kicks off today with boys varsity swimming hosting Ridgefield at the Darien YMCA at 3:00 pm. On the court, girls freshman basketball hosts New Canaan at 3:30 pm, while girls jv basketball and girls varsity basketball head to New Canaan for games at 3:30 pm and 5:00 pm. Our boys and girls varsity indoor track & field teams will be competing in the FCIAC last chance meet at Staples High School starting at 4:30 pm. Later this evening, boys varsity basketball travels to New Canaan for a 7:00 pm tip-off, boys varsity squash faces Bronxville at Pyramid Square at 7:30 pm, and boys jv hockey hosts New Canaan at Stamford Twin Rinks at 8:30 pm. Tomorrow boys freshman basketball and boys jv basketball take on New Canaan at home at 10:00 am and 11:30 am, respectively. In the afternoon, girls varsity gymnastics competes in the FCIAC championship at 2:00 pm. The day wraps up on the ice as boys varsity hockey travels to the Sports Center of Connecticut to face St. Joseph at 5:45 pm, followed by girls varsity hockey taking on New Canaan at the Darien Ice House at 6:40 pm. Go Blue Wave!

Stay tuned for next week's special edition of the community update from Dr. Amy Fedigan, with a primary focus on our curriculum. Stay warm and enjoy the Super Bowl...Let's Go Jets! Maybe some day.

Sincerely,



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