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April 24, 2026

Dear Darien Community,

I hope you had a wonderful spring break.

Spring State Assessments Update

Beginning next week, students across our district will begin participating in state-mandated assessments. Students in grades 3 through 8 participate in the Smarter Balanced Assessments (SBA) for English Language Arts and Mathematics. Additionally, students in grades 5, 8, and 11 take the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) assessment. Specific assessment schedules for each school will be shared by building administrators. While these standardized measures provide a valuable snapshot of student achievement, they are just one piece of the puzzle and differ from the variety of classroom assessments that guide our instruction. Our students are already familiar with the format of these measures through their regular classroom activities, and we are confident they will feel comfortable navigating these assessments. Results will be distributed to districts in the early fall, at which point individual student reports will be shared with you.

FY27 Budget

At the April 7 Board of Finance meeting the BOF approved the Board of Education FY27 Budget of \$130,179,922. The RTM will now vote on the budget on Monday, May 11. The questions and discussion between the boards was thoughtful, rigorous, and helpful. I appreciate the support of our school district budget by the Board of Finance.

Parent University

Thank you to the nearly 30 participants who spent their time with us on Monday at Parent University! The evening was filled with productive insights into executive functioning, PK-12 instructional strategies, and home-based learning supports. We owe a debt of thanks to Principal Kate Dimoulas and the MMS custodial team for hosting us so well. This program wouldn't have been possible without the collaboration of Dr. Scott McCarthy, Director of Special Education K-12, and Dr. Alycia Dadd, Director of Mental Health.

Fireside Chat

Our spring Fireside Chat at Darien High School was an inspiring evening of community and conversation. We took a deep dive into the Vision of the Graduate, specifically focusing on how we cultivate Empathy, Independence, and Integrity within our schools. Thank you to all who attended and shared their perspective! If you missed the live event, the recording will be added to our website on Monday. Special thanks to Principal Mrs. Dunn and the DHS custodial team for hosting us and ensuring the evening ran smoothly.

Out of the Darkness Walk

We look forward to seeing our community unite this Sunday, April 26, for the 4th Annual Out of the Darkness Walk. By partnering with the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, we aim to raise both awareness and essential funds for

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research while supporting those affected by suicide. The walk will be held at the DHS Stadium Field, starting with registration at 11:00 am and a ceremony at 11:30 am. Participants will then walk the cross-country trail in a show of solidarity. This is a rain or shine event with an indoor backup plan in place, and all individuals or teams are encouraged to register or donate at www.afsp.org/darien.

Byrne's Book Club

Our final selection for this year's book club is Jeffrey Selingo's *Dream School*. We'll be discussing the evolving landscape of higher education and how students can navigate the college search to find a "fit" that fosters both academic success and personal growth. Please join me and Director of School Counseling, Ms. Cathy Ostar, for the conversation on Tuesday, May 5 at 7:00 pm in the MMS library.

Around Town

It's a busy weekend ahead in Darien, beginning tomorrow with the Darien Nature Center's Spring Into Nature from 10:00 am to 2:00 pm. This Earth Day festival features a hawk release, live music, and water-focused educational activities for the whole family. Tickets can be purchased [here](#). On Sunday, April 26, head to the Darien Community Association from 10:00 am to 1:00 pm for the [Community-Wide Volunteer Fair](#), where you can meet with local non-profits and explore ways to give back.

DHS Sports

Get ready for an action-packed stretch of competition for the Blue Wave! Our teams are hitting the fields, courts, and waters in force this weekend with a series of matchups at home and on the road. Roll Wave!

Please see the schedule of weekend games:

Friday's Schedule:

- 4:00 PM: Boys Freshman Baseball vs. St. Joseph (Away at St. Joseph High School)
- 4:00 PM: Girls Varsity Softball vs. St. Joseph (Away at St. Joseph High School)
- 4:00 PM: Boys Varsity Baseball vs. St. Joseph (Home at DHS Varsity Field)
- 4:00 PM: Boys JV Baseball vs. St. Joseph (Home at DHS JV Field)
- 4:00 PM: Boys & Girls Varsity Track @ O'Grady Relays (Away at Danbury High School)
- 4:30 PM: Boys Varsity Volleyball vs. Shelton (Home at DHS Main Gym)
- 6:00 PM: Boys JV Volleyball vs. Shelton (Home at DHS Main Gym)

Saturday's Schedule:

- 9:00 AM: Coed Varsity Sailing @ CT State Championships (Away at Grass Island)
- 10:00 AM: Girls Varsity Lacrosse vs. Bayport Blue Point (Away at Cold Spring Harbor HS)
- 10:30 AM: Boys JV Lacrosse vs. Brunswick (Home at DHS Stadium Field)
- 12:00 PM: Boys Varsity Rugby vs. COBRA (Away at Notre Dame Prep)
- 1:00 PM: Boys Varsity Lacrosse vs. Brunswick (Home at DHS Stadium Field)

Sunday's Schedule:

- 9:30 AM: Coed Varsity Sailing @ Fleet Race O'Day Qualified (Away in Bristol, RI)

Sincerely,



Eric A. Byrne, Ed.D.

Superintendent of Schools