



SUPERINTENDENT UPDATE for December 2018

Dear FPS Community,

December's arrival indicates that winter break is almost upon us, so I'd like to share a few district updates before everyone enjoys a little time off and some well-deserved rest. There is much to be thankful for this school year, and FPS is especially grateful for our very generous parent and community organizations. Because of their support, we benefit from important grants, staff acknowledgements, and numerous positive experiences for students. I would like to wish all FPS families a joyous holiday filled with relaxation, laughter and new memories with your children. Thank you for giving us the gift of teaching your children.

UPDATES

Holland Hill Construction

Please note that there will be a late opening for **only** Holland Hill on January 2, 2018. This will provide some extra time in the morning for teachers to complete setting up their classrooms after the construction move over the break. School will start at 10:55 a.m. for Holland Hill on January 2nd.

Parent Information on Vaping (also called Jeweling - Juuling)

FPS is working hard to educate our youth about the dangers of vaping. For many years, anti-smoking campaigns and health-related curriculum were geared towards curbing the smoking epidemic. Now, vaping has taken the place of the old cigarette. It is important to know that vaping has become an issue as early as middle school and continues to be a challenge in high school. Fairfield Cares has worked to support our youth by sending letters to local establishments that sell these items to our underage students. Vaping and jeweling are the same thing, which is a question often asked by those who are just learning about the topic. Juul (pronounced jewel) is the brand name of an e-cigarette which resembles a flash drive. There is a [short article](#) that ran last spring in *Education Week* which shows a picture of the device and provides some basic information which parents may find useful. Experts say the best thing that parents can do is be informed, and talk to children about the dangers.

BUDGET

The FPS annual budget cycle has begun and the Superintendent's Proposed Budget will be presented to the Board of Education on January 8, 2019. This year we are anticipating an increase in maintenance costs, including an increase in electricity due to completed renovations at Sherman and Holland Hill. These schools will now have life-safety sprinklers, mechanical means of fresh air, and air conditioning for the 2019-2020 year. In addition, several maintenance projects are planned in all 17 schools, and great work will continue in support of the District Improvement Plan, STEAM and Vision

of the Graduate. I look forward to sharing more information with you in the 2019-2020 budget proposal. The Board of Education will have a full schedule reviewing the Superintendent's budget on the following dates: January 15, 22 and 24. Following that, the Board of Education will work on presenting the BoE budget to the Boards of Selectmen and Finance and the full RTM.

FOOD ALLERGIES

As a reminder, we ask families to help FPS keep all of our children safe from food allergies. We have many students throughout the district who have nut allergies, some of which are life-threatening. Per the Board of Education policy, classroom snacks should not contain peanuts or tree nuts. After school, food is only to be consumed in the cafeteria or outside so that FPS can ensure that surfaces remain clean after being wiped down. Just a trace of peanut residue can send some of our students into anaphylactic shock. We have a link on our website to help parents understand [healthy and safe snacks](#), and we ask for your help in abiding by the policy so that all children are safe.

EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTER DISCUSSION

The Early Childhood Center (ECC) preschool opened in 2003 and since that time, many FPS families have enrolled their young children. By federal law, preschool is required in public schools for children with special needs from the age of three. Just ten years ago there were approximately 75 children who attended our ECC, which has a building capacity of 84 students. In the last decade our program has more than doubled and there are now approximately 160 students. As a result, FPS is proposing a short-term solution for next fall that would immediately ease overcrowding and ensure sufficient space for our little ones. Six classrooms will remain at ECC, and four or five classrooms will be moved to another FPS property, beginning in September 2019. The Board of Education will make a final decision on the 2nd location in January. Long-term solutions are also being explored, and the BoE will be reviewing and discussing those options at a later time.

HIGH SCHOOL CUMULATIVE GRADING

A new grading practice for high school students has been put into place this year. As a reminder, parents and students can reference the ['Questions and Answers'](#) document for review. We will continue to gather parent, student and staff input throughout the year.

2019-2020 CALENDAR

The 2019-2020 School Calendar is approved and available on the website. Please click [here](#) to see the approved version.

Have a wonderful Winter Break!

Dr. Toni Jones

Superintendent of Schools
Fairfield Public Schools