



2018-2019

Opening of School, Updates, Looking Forward

September 4, 2018

Dear Masconomet Families,

It is a pleasure to welcome our students back for an exciting 2018-2019 school year, and to welcome our new seventh graders who joined the Masco Community last Thursday.

Our students can look forward to an exciting, challenging, and rewarding school year, and parents can be confident that their children will receive an excellent education with many opportunities to explore.

I would like to bring several pieces of information to your attention as your children return for the new school year and families are gearing up their schedules to coincide with their children's schedules and needs.

First, let me remind you that I am always looking for your input and feedback. There will continue to be a **"Message the Superintendent"** link on the [District Home Page](#), through which you can communicate with me, indicating that you want a response, or to message me anonymously. One of my goals continues to be the improvement of school and District communication and to provide easy feedback options for parents and community members.

The **Masco App** is a great way to access a number of school resources and lots of information on your mobile devices. You can download the app, *Masconomet RSD*, for iPhones from the iTunes store, and for Android phones from Google Play.



New Phone System

There have been a number of great projects completed this summer at Masco, all of which will positively contribute to our educational programs and several improvements directly related to school safety. Masco's outdated and inefficient phone system has been upgraded to a new Voice-Over-Internet-Protocol (VOIP) system that will provide benefits internally (especially in regard to safety and security) and to our callers.

Masco's main number remains 978-887-2323, but internal extensions have changed effective with the opening of school.

Our web site staff directory has been updated [STAFF DIRECTORY](#).

New Signage

A major signage project was completed over the summer. All rooms in the schools were renumbered to a new system that should provide easier navigation of the building. New outside signage of buildings and parking lots should improve traffic flow and the added signs will be helpful to visitors. Inside kiosk style and hanging signage will better direct, students, staff, parents, and visitors. Changes will create a learning curve for those used to the old system, but will make things easier and more logical over time. The new system conforms to public safety standards and will assist in any public safety responses, particularly any response that involves multiple agencies.

New STEAM Lab at Masco Middle School

The Masconomet Education Foundation (MEF) has once again, gone over the top in fund-raising to improve our educational program at Masconomet. Two years ago, the fabulous High School Science-Technology-Engineering-Art (STEAM) Lab opened, thanks to MEF. That was a huge effort and sum of money donated to the District. This year, the Middle School Steam Lab is open for students on the first day of school! MEF worked very closely with teachers and administration to build a Middle School Lab matching the STEAM curriculum and interests of students. It is incredible, and I hope you get to see it during Middle School Open House on September 13th. What a STEAM resource for our students now in grades 7-12! Mr. Malio is all smiles. Many thanks, MEF.

Safety and Security

Safety and security will remain a priority at Masconomet. We will focus again this year on more training for staff and students and live drills that include students. We have a very safe campus, but we must increase our capacity to respond to different types of safety and security threats. We work closely with Public Safety and Public Health Departments in crisis response planning and practice. Please know that we take safety and security very seriously and constantly strive to improve our plans and practices. Also, we have a third-party managed "Safe School Hotline" for reports about bullying or other safety matters. The 3rd party can guarantee anonymity when it is desired. The link to the Hotline is on the District web page under Helpful Links/Safety.

Our mantra to students is "Hear something, say something" Students are constantly urged to be situationally aware and to report anything they hear or see that does not seem right in regard to safety. Please reinforce this message at home!

[A.L.I.C.E.](#)



Alert, Lockdown, Inform, Counter, Evacuate. The A.L.I.C.E. active shooter training will be an essential part of our Crisis Intervention and Response planning again this year. Learn more about A.L.I.C.E. at <https://www.alicetraining.com/>. I will be sending out an invitation this fall for a public information session being planned for parents. This will be an opportunity for parents to provide feedback, ideas, and to share concerns with Masco administration.

Practice and Drills

Masco will continue to hold practice fire and other emergency drills throughout the year. Students will have a greater level of participation in training as A.L.I.C.E. concepts are brought into practice drills.

Increased Presence of School Resource Officers (SROs)

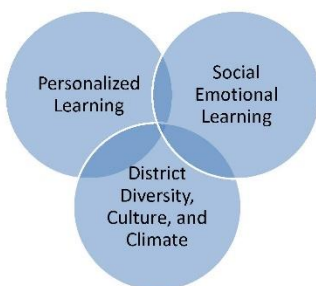
We are grateful to the Police Departments of all three towns for increasing their commitment of SROs and adding hours to their schedules to create a daily presence. SROs now have an office in the Middle School where they can meet together and meet with our Director of Security and Crisis Response, as well as meet with students and parents with privacy.

I had the privilege last week to give a fist time award for non-staff contributors to Masco in areas of safety and wellbeing. We have so many great contributors to Masconomet who are not employees of the District, I felt like we should begin a tradition of recognizing these individuals. This award is intended to recognize outstanding contributions in the areas of safety and health, or Social Emotional Learning, or Student Risk-Behavior Reduction, or Mental Health, or Teacher Professional Development in one or more of the above areas.

The 2018 recipient of this award is Boxford Police Chief James Riter. [Tri-Town Transcript Article](#)

District Reading 2018

Masconomet Vision 2025
Strategic Opportunities and Strategies



Each year I give all faculty and staff reading for the year, related to the District’s Vision and objectives. Last year it was the book, “Students at the Center”, that presented a model for personalizing teaching and learning. This year, each staff member received a binder containing three articles supporting our objectives of the year, to increase the capacity of all staff members to personalize learning, create environments that foster SEL growth of all students, and to grow all staff in the capacity to improve classroom, school and District diversity, culture and climate. Developing relationships with students is a most recent focus of staff development related to diversity, culture, and climate.

One of the articles this year has a very strong focus on the importance of SEL development of students and its relationship to success in higher education, work, and life. If you are interested in looking at what staff is reading and will be working on in staff development activities, here is the link to the readings. [BINDER](#)

School Start Times



A change to a later start time for Masconomet students remains under active consideration. The implementation goal is 2019-2020 (next fall). An Ad Hoc Committee comprised of representatives of the Masco, Boxford, Middleton, and Topsfield School Committees is meeting regularly with a goal of making a recommendation to the members' respective School Committees this fall. Watch for emerging news on this subject in the coming weeks.

I highly recommend an easy to watch 10-minute Ted Radio Hour Video on later start times recorded by sleep researcher Wendy Troxel, titled "Does High School Start Too Early." It is very applicable to Middle School and High School. It is an excellent short summary of the science and research on adolescent sleep time in a very digestible form. [WATCH IT NOW](#)

Homework

The Middle School formalized new guidelines for homework at the end of last year, based on a review of best practices and surveys given to students, teachers and parents. The new guidelines will be introduced to students this week and to parents at Open House on September 13th. Homework guideline review and revision is an active process at the High School this year and will be concluded with new guidelines by year's end.

Social Emotional Learning – a K-12 Initiative

Social Emotional Learning (SEL) "is the process through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions." (Source: Casel.org (<http://www.casel.org/what-is-sel/>))

SEL, and specifically the 4 Quadrants*, were the main subject of staff development over the last week and will continue to be a theme supporting [Masconomet Vision 2025](#). With the generous assistance of the Tri-Town Council, I was able to present each staff member a wall hanging placard titled, "20 Ways to Build Developmental Relationships with Young People". Teachers and other staff members are in a powerful position to help build strong SEL skills and behaviors in our students. Parents play an even more important role. You may find the "20 Ways" concepts helpful in thinking about how your children are growing, and what influences their attitudes and behaviors. [Web Link](#)

The Tri-Town Union Schools and Masconomet have recently agreed to adopt the same common understandings of SEL and a vocabulary that will be common to teachers from kindergarten through high school graduation in the Tri-Towns. We have called this common understanding of terms the "4 Quadrants". With our own resources for professional development and teaching and assessment tools and with the assistance of the Tri-Town Council, your schools, K-12, will be working closely together with each other, and with you, to build the most socially-emotionally prepared graduates possible. This takes a village, especially to ensure that ALL students benefit. [4 Quadrants Graphic](#)

As a district, we continue to move toward developing a social emotional learning community that supports our students in all areas of their lives.

Digital Resources and Social Media

Technology and social media continue to be both a wonderful educational opportunity as well as a challenge to help ensure their appropriate use. This is a great opportunity to teach our students responsible digital citizenship (using technology and media for the good) and the harm possible to both



others and self through misuse. Please talk to your children about the dangers of social media including the fact that almost everything done on-line contributes to an individual's "digital footprint" that may be viewed in the future by potential schools or employers.

We need to be sure that all of our students understand that misused social media is a common culprit in bullying, civil rights violations, and expressions of hate — none of which can be tolerated. Both schools and families must continuously reinforce this message with our children.

Masco continues to engage students on this subject and is working to strengthen curriculum about internet safety and citizenship.

Masconomet is a great District and I hope to work with you to make it even stronger—more exceptional.

During this school year, I will continue to meet individually, or in small groups, with as many staff, students, parents and community members as possible to explore your expectations, aspirations, and what you value most.

Masco's Vision 2025 can bring out the best in all of us if we take its message to heart and absorb the vision into our school practices and have the community's support for its underlying values.

Again, welcome to the 2018-2019 school year. It promises to be an exciting and rewarding one.

Warm regards,



Kevin M. Lyons
Superintendent of Schools

