

Dear Masconomet Families and Staff,

Marking the return from the February vacation, I would like to share several updates with you.

Problem-Solver and Communications Quick Reference Guide

The school district always seeks to promote good communication – with parents, the Towns, and within and among the schools themselves. This Problem–Solver and Communications Guide is intended to foster good communication. While we encourage students at Masco to advocate for themselves first and foremost, we understand that the role of the parent or guardian continues to be an important factor in the academic and social success of each student. We also encourage parents and guardians to communicate their concerns to the school. This guide was produced with the guidance of the School Committee’s Community Relations Subcommittee. It is intended as a beginning and not a final product. There is a link in the guide to provide ideas and feedback to improve it. Problem Solver [Link](#). The Problem-Solver is always available on the District web page.

School Safety and Security

Our schools have continued to prepare for emergencies and to review security measures. After two incidents in the fall related to weapons and the actual emergency of a power outage and loss of generators, many steps have been taken to review and renew plans. Our number one defense against any aggressor that threatens the health or safety of students and staff is a proactive staff and student body with a high level of awareness to observe and report any suspicious behavior or threat. Threats or suspicion of threats can always be brought to the attention of school administrators. We also have an anonymous tip email box managed by a third party to assure anonymity, in place. This [Link](#) to the Safe School Hotline is always on the front page of the District web site. We had our last lockdown drill on January 27th with an after-action meeting to process all that went as expected and where there were issues. Staff forwarded a number of communication issues related to our outdated PA system and phone system. The Masconomet School Committee hopes to address these issues with a capital plan that would enable replacements and upgrades to security and safety equipment and software. On March 6th, our entire staff was updated on crisis response and security. We have additional drills on the spring calendar. I have proposed the expansion of our Security Coordinator position to a full-time, year-round position with administrative authority. If included in the budget that is voted, this additional capacity would provide a needed leadership position focused on safety and crisis response. In April, our two Principals, along with public safety officers from the three towns and along with Tri-Town Union administrators will attend a 3-day training program in managing threats to schools. Our Security Coordinator and I will complete the same training in June. We continue to receive excellent support and visibility from our School Resource Officers (SROs), one officer from each of the towns. Masconomet will continue to be a safe and healthy environment for teaching and learning.

Essex Heritage and Showcase of Masco High School Students Work — Masconomet sophomores working on the Essex County Project as part of the history curriculum have been invited to showcase their video projects by Essex Heritage, the non-profit engaged in teaching and learning about the history and heritage of Essex County. This is a public-invited event to be held at the Salem Regional Visitor Center on Wednesday, March 22. We are all invited. What an

honor! Kudos to our Sophomore Team of teachers and the educators that have developed this unique curriculum. Please follow the [Link](#) for more information.

School Budget and School Choice Public Hearings, February 27, 2017

On Monday, February 27, the Masconomet Regional School District School Committee will hold a public hearing to discuss the Draft Fiscal 2018 Budget and whether or not to participate in School Choice next year. The meeting will be held in the Masco High School Library. All members of the Tri-Town community are encouraged to attend.

The meeting will begin at 7:00 pm. The Committee has invited state government representatives to speak at the beginning of the meeting regarding the current state funding for education and their expectations for funding in the future. Audience members may also use this opportunity to address their state representatives with school-related funding and other concerns. The public hearing on the Fiscal 2018 Budget will officially begin after any comments our state representatives may have. The public hearing on School Choice will begin immediately after the public hearing on the budget, but no earlier than 8:00 pm.

Draft Fiscal 2018 Budget

The Proposed Budget was developed during the months of December and January through a series of Masco administration leadership meetings and meetings with the School Committee's Budget Subcommittee. School Committee meetings to deliberate the budget began on February 15 and 16 and will continue on February 27th and March 1st. The annual budget hearing is required by state law and allows all who are present the opportunity to ask questions and comment on the Draft Budget. Subsequent budget deliberation meetings will be held after the public hearing and deliberation on February 27th, in March (6, 8, 13, 15) to finalize and certify the budget. Immediately below are links to important budget documents.

[Executive Summary](#)

[FY18 Proposed Budget Book](#)

[Finance and Budget Page](#)

[Staffing/Enrollment Analysis Report](#)

[February 15, 2017 PowerPoint of Budget Overview to School Committee](#)

School Choice

State law requires every school committee to hold a public hearing each year to hear from community members on whether or not the district should participate in the School Choice program. If a district decides to participate in School Choice, the district would also determine the number of students from other districts that would be allowed to attend the district schools. The School Committee must take a vote annually prior to June 1 regarding their participation in School Choice during the upcoming school year. Masconomet has not participated in the School Choice program since the 1990s. For the community's convenience, the School Committee has decided to hold the annual School Choice public hearing on the same night as the Budget Hearing.

Masconomet Education Association Raises \$50,000 for Masco Curriculum and Instruction

The third annual Dancing With Our Stars was bigger and better. The January 30th fundraiser will equip the Masco STEAM program and many teacher projects. What an amazing community turn-out to support our schools! Masconomet thanks Lynne Bermudez and her hard-working Board and members, all of the dancers, adults and students (you were fantastic), the

choreographers, the International Martial Arts Academy of Topsfield, and all of the prize donors and individual contributors. MEF continues to make a huge impact on teaching and learning at Masconomet! Our new STEAM Lab has created many new opportunities for our students – thanks to MEF.



School Committee Approves 2017-2018 School Calendar

The Masconomet School Committee approved the school calendar for next year at its February 15th meeting. Masco and the Tri-Town Union administrations are still working on the alignment of early release days and professional days. [Calendar Link](#)

Masconomet Middle School Honored at State House Celebration

Masconomet Middle School was recently honored at the State House as a Massachusetts Commendation School. Our Middle School moved from a Level II to a Level I status this year as a result of improving MCAS scores. It's welcome to the top for Dr. Flaherty and her students and staff. Congratulations, this is quite an honor. [Link](#) to invitation from the Commissioner.



Retiring Powerschool App — The District will retire the current Powerschool Mobile App through which students and parents access grade reports and absence records. The problem with the Powerschool app is that it generates emails or push notifications with every transaction, for example, every time an absence is recorded or whenever a teacher makes a change to grades or progress reports. With our concerns about student anxiety and societal pressure about grades, this constant pinging of accounts is, in my mind, an unnecessary distraction and anxiety builder. The Schoolwires app refreshes only once every 24 hours and provides a static picture for the 24-hour period. The once-a-day refresh is a snapshot with all changes in the previous 12:00am to 12:00am period. Parents and students will still be able to use the Powerschool web transaction to look at real time changes. This requires more effort, and it is a decision access this web site. We will take the Powerschool app off-line during the April vacation week. Don't forget to download the free Schoolwires Masco App from Apple or from the Android store.

Boston Globe Scholastic Art and Writing Awards — What a year! Masconomet was a dominant force in the state-wide Boston Globe Scholastic Art and Writing Awards competition. Below are links to the entire state list of Gold Key and other winners as well as a link to Masconomet winners only.

[All Massachusetts](#)

[Masconomet Winners](#)

Masconomet Vision 2025

Vision 2025 was developed by a large Strategic Planning Committee in 2015-2016 and the new vision was adopted by the School Committee this past fall. The staff is engaged in imagining what changes in culture and in teaching and learning will lead to the achievement of the vision. A strategic planning draft will be brought forward by the administration for public comment and for School Committee approval before the next school year begins. This is a [Link](#) to the Masco District Page where you can click the Vision tab to read the Vision and Values Statements.

Please remember that you can always “message the Superintendent” from the District web site and request a response or remain anonymous. You can also email me at klyons@masconomet.org.

Welcome back from vacation to our students and instructional staff. We are looking forward to the expected excellence and continuous improvement in our instructional and student support programs.

Warm regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kevin M. Lyons". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial 'K'.

Kevin M. Lyons
Superintendent of Schools