



Amesbury Public Schools

Office of the Superintendent of Schools

September 10, 2020

Dear Families,

I have spent the last few days walking the halls of the schools, checking on the preparations for the school year and listening in on the teacher's professional development. The absence of the children and the brightly colored decorations welcoming them back were stark reminders that this year is going to be unlike any other in the past. Unfortunately the reminders of the changing world exist well beyond the walls of the school buildings. The civil unrest in many of our cities, the divisive political climate in our nation and the economic stress of the pandemic have begun taking their toll. Many of us have been separated from family members, reinvented our jobs, taken on new roles and responsibilities in our lives, and some have even needed to mourn the loss of loved ones.

Our schools and our world are in crisis. It is at this time that we must find the strength to offer compassion, and demonstrate what Sean Decatur calls a *generosity of grace*. The teachers, staff and administrators have been working tirelessly to prepare for the new school year. While much has been done to maximize the success of the school year, I know that we won't find success with everything. Our failures and shortcomings will be on full display. Teachers will be broadcasting their lessons into homes and in their effort to teach students remotely they will open themselves up to potential scrutiny by onlookers. Likewise parents will do their best to fill in the gaps and to support their children at home, and they may find themselves falling short of their own expectations.

It is at this time probably more than ever that we must replace frustration and fatigue with compassion and empathy. Not just for others, but for ourselves as well. We must empathize with the many parents that will struggle to work out the details of work and childcare, while we realize that our teachers and staff are struggling with the same issue. We must be able to forgive ourselves when we realize that doing our best may still not be enough. We must be willing to offer grace and kindness in place of the anger and fatigue that we feel.

This isn't an easy task. To find grace and compassion when we are angry and exhausted will at times seem impossible. To be patient and empathetic when we are frustrated will strain our already overtaxed emotional stores. I have struggled with this myself. I am tired of walking back to my car to retrieve my mask when I forget to put it on when I walked towards the door of Market Basket. I am angry that this pandemic has kept me from hugging my own mother for fear of getting her sick as she continues her fight with cancer. Yet I know that in these most troubling times it is not our differences nor our discourse that will get us through this crisis, but instead it will be our common goal and shared desire to do our best for the children in the community. We may disagree on how we meet this goal, and this isn't to say that we aren't looking for feedback on how

we can do things better. But feedback is criticism tempered with grace. It presumes that people are doing the best they can and there is a shared respect for everyone's effort. Over the next few weeks we will see students return to school in a remote environment, and some of our neediest students will return to in person learning. It will be difficult. It will be imperfect. But we will come together and get this done. And it is my belief that we will do so with a *generosity of grace*, and a compassion for others that will allow our children to look back on this time and be proud.

In the meantime the principals and teachers will be sending out information about the upcoming "meet and greets", and your child's teacher will be able to provide you with information about the daily schedules and routine.

I hope that you all remain well, and I look forward to seeing all the students return to school as soon as is possible.

Regards,

Jared Fulgoni