

# Cresskill Public Schools



## News from the Superintendent's Desk September 2017

Welcome Back Parents!

I hope that the summer months provided an opportunity to reflect on all the good things in your lives and how fortunate we are to live in a wonderful community that truly supports education. We are looking forward to having your children begin the 2017-2018 school year, and are honored and proud to serve your children. Our dedicated staff will continue to provide an outstanding educational experience. We hope that you, as parents, will continue to demonstrate your support by staying involved in your child's education. Together we can encourage our students to achieve their dreams.

Please review the information below that provides important and pertinent information for the 2017-2018 school year.

- **Cresskill School District Referendum Vote: Tuesday, September 26th**

Over the past five years, the Cresskill Board of Education has conducted a comprehensive review of the increasing school district-wide enrollment. This process involved not only hundreds of hours of Board and committee meetings, but also numerous additional meetings with concerned parents, both in public and in private. After much deliberation and a careful review of two recent demographic studies, the Cresskill Board of Education has proposed a \$12.4 million bond referendum for vote by the Cresskill community on Tuesday, September 26th.

The referendum was developed after intense scrutiny and consultation with a wide array of professionals from both within Cresskill and throughout the State of New Jersey. The proposal addresses what the District concluded are critical needs in order to maintain the safety and structural integrity of our school buildings for students and overall community. As a result of our comprehensive review, we discovered the following issues:

- The need for eight new general education classrooms to address excessively large K-5 class sizes as well as speech, basic skills, music, and art classes that currently function without a classroom
- Replacement of both elementary school roofs
- Window replacements are needed at both elementary schools for both fiscal and energy savings
- Security and infrastructure technology upgrades at all three buildings

These are challenging times for school districts throughout the State of New Jersey. Operating budgets have been subject to a mandatory two percent tax levy cap, which has applied to increases in salaries, health benefits, energy, and insurance costs for seven consecutive years.

Because many of these expenses have been increasing at or above two percent, it is very difficult, if not impossible, for school districts to earmark millions of dollars to address increased enrollment and aging infrastructure concerns without resorting to the referendum process. By using a referendum process to resolve these issues, the Cresskill School District is eligible for Debt Service Relief from the state totaling four million dollars. Please understand that this funding is contingent upon the Cresskill community approval of the bond referendum.

The Board of Education understands the genuine need for keeping property taxes low in a challenging economic climate, which is the reason this referendum only addresses necessary and systemic issues. Our goal each year is to provide an education that maintains our outstanding programs while being fiscally sound and sensitive to our economic climate. Each year, the Cresskill School District ranks as one of the most successful school districts with one of the lowest per pupil costs in all of Bergen County. This referendum supports that goal while maintaining the integrity of the Cresskill Schools for future years.

It is my sincere hope that everyone participates and votes on Tuesday, September 26. The polls will be open from 7:00 am to 8:00 pm. Please take the time to visit our website for more information and consider attending our Referendum Fair on Monday, September 18th at 7:00 pm at Cresskill High School. We very much appreciate all the community's support that has enabled the Cresskill School District to become and remain one of the best school districts in the state of New Jersey.

- **School Start and End Times**

**Regular School Day**

**Cresskill High School**

Start Time:	7:40 a.m.
Lunch:	10:59 a.m. – 11:44 a.m.
End Time:	3:00 p.m.
Step by Step Preschool	8:45 a.m. – 2:45 p.m.
First Steps - AM	8:45 a.m. – 11:15 a.m.
First Steps - PM	12:15 p.m. – 2:45 p.m.

**Cresskill Middle School**

Start Time:	8:18 a.m.
Lunch:	11:48 a.m. – 12:33 p.m.
End Time:	3:00 p.m.

**Edward H. Bryan School**

Start Time:	8:30 a.m.
Lunch:	11:20 a.m. – 12:55 p.m.
End Time:	3:10 p.m.
Step By Step program	8:45 a.m. – 2:45 p.m.

**Merritt Memorial School**

Start Time:	8:30 a.m.
Lunch:	12:05 p.m. – 12:50 p.m.
End time:	3:10 p.m.

**Early Dismissal/Minimum Day**

**Cresskill Middle School/High School**

HS Start Time:	7:40 a.m.
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MS Start Time:	7:52 a.m.
HS & MS End Time:	11:52 a.m.
Step by Step Preschool	8:45 a.m. – 12:45 p.m.
First Steps – AM	8:45 a.m. – 10:15 a.m.
First Steps – PM	11:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

**Edward H. Bryan/Merritt Memorial School**

Start Time:	8:30 a.m.
End Time:	12:40 p.m.

**Delayed Opening**

**Cresskill Middle School/High School**

HS Start Time:	10:00 a.m.
MS Start Time:	10:15 a.m.
HS & MS End Time:	3:02 p.m.
Step by Step Preschool	10:45 a.m. – 2:45 p.m.
First Steps – AM	11:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.
First Steps – PM	1:15 p.m. – 2:45 p.m.

**Edward H. Bryan/Merritt Memorial School**

Start Time:	10:30 a.m.
End Time:	3:10 p.m.

- **The Importance of Attendance**

The Cresskill School District believes regular attendance plays a key role in student achievement. Studies have shown that chronic absenteeism affects academic performance. Students are required to attend school and classes on time each day. Beginning in the 2012-2013 school year, the New Jersey School Performance Report defined a chronically absent student as a student who is not present for 10% of the school year, **for any reason**. For example, the school year for a Cresskill student is 180 days. If that student misses 18 days, they are considered chronically absent.

While the policy from the State Department is stringent, I believe that we do have some latitude. It is understandable if the child is absent due to illness, due to quarantine under the direction of a county or city health officer, for justifiable personal reasons including an appearance in court, observance of a holiday or ceremony of his or her religion. All other absences will be unexcused. To reduce the number of absences I encourage parents to reconsider vacations during the school year and medical appointments during school hours. In the 2017-2018 school year, letters will be periodically generated for absences and tardies. This communication will provide opportunities for parent and principal to discuss potential concerns about excessive absences throughout the year. In accordance with the State mandate, the Board of Education policy for Retention and Promotion has been changed to reflect the new guidelines that a child must attend 90% of the school days or 162 days.

- **Cresskill Education Foundation**

Our Cresskill Education Foundation works hard each year to provide funding for valuable activities, materials, and services at each of our schools. Thanks to the overwhelming generosity of parents and community members, the Foundation donated more than \$27,000 last year for school programs, resources, and technology. With this outstanding level of support, our schools were able to provide a sound system for Merritt School gymnasium,

elementary guidance resources, a tabloid printer and laminator for the High/Middle School classes, elementary literacy resources for both elementary schools, a character education presentation for our the Middle School, enhancements to our K-12 music program, microphones for our High/Middle School auditorium, a Kindergarten Language Arts program for Bryan School, and ESL ipads for Bryan School. You will receive your Annual Fund Drive contribution materials in September. I hope you will support the Foundation in funding our outstanding schools. Every student in the district benefits, and we hope that every family will help in whatever way they can to ensure that there are sufficient funds for these enhancements to our school programs.

- **Traffic Safety**

The administration has worked with the Cresskill Police Department to develop new traffic and parking protocols to address the increasing enrollment throughout the district. The principals will be highlighting these changes in their school newsletters next week.

It is important for drivers to be considerate of our residential neighbors when approaching, waiting, or parking around schools. I ask that you follow all traffic signs at all schools and refrain from idling your car while waiting to pick up your child. Please drive carefully and take care not to block residential driveways, even when waiting in your vehicle. Please be aware that the Police Department will ticket violators they observe on public streets and parking lots.

- **Educational Enhancements**

Many teachers have spent the summer preparing for the 2017-2018 school year. They attended in-district workshops on project based learning and how it impacts our curriculum and instruction, how to use data to differentiate instruction, and developed units of study in all subject areas that support all learners. Next week, our new teachers are also attending a two day workshop to support their first year in the district.

Our content area supervisors will continue to work with K-12 staff in order to provide a coordinated effort amongst all three schools. This structure is particularly helpful as we embark on the implementation real-world applications to maximize student learning and student growth objectives for all teachers.

On behalf of the entire Board of Education, we look forward to a successful school year and continue to appreciate the support of our Cresskill community and our dedicated staff. Please visit our website for more information on what is happening in the Cresskill Schools, along with following us on Twitter @CresskillBOE. If you have any questions, comments or concerns please feel free to contact me at [mburke@cboek12.org](mailto:mburke@cboek12.org).

Thank you for your commitment to your child's education.

*Michael Burke*

Superintendent of Schools