

# Elementary students back full time

By JACK FICHTER  
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — Students have returned to a full school day five days a week at Cape May City Elementary School following a half-day schedule due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

During a virtual Board of Education meeting March 18, Principal Zack Palombo said students were eating in their classrooms rather than using the cafeteria.

"Our kids are excited," he said. "It's definitely been an adjustment period for our little guys."

Palombo said a room is provided just for prekindergarten students to take a nap.

Seven families have placed their children back in school following a period of virtual instruction, he said, adding that most staff members have received COVID-19 vaccinations.

He said they were attempting to get substitute teachers vaccinated since substitutes are in short supply.

"There is no doubt we are doing the best thing for our students by having us back here five days a week, full

time, and we're doing in a safe manner," Palombo said.

The school's swimming pool is expected to be open for students by May. The school board approved the city using the pool for life-guard tests on three Saturday mornings beginning May 1.

Business Administrator John Thomas said the state Department of Health has published guidelines for re-opening public pools. The guidelines require a "COVID Ambassador" to be present to remind users to keep their distance and wear masks, he said.

Thomas said the lifeguards would not use the locker rooms at the school.

The school board discussed returning to in-person meetings beginning April 15. Thomas noted students would be returning from spring break the prior week and some may need to quarantine due to traveling.

He said the board could provide a video feed for members of the public who do not wish to attend the meeting in person.

Superintendent Robert Garguilo said he expected

school would open on a normal schedule in the fall.

"We want our school to look normal, so we are going to plan to be that way. Unless things drastically change again, we would hope we will have a full-day schedule," he said.

The school board submitted its 2021 budget to the county Board of Education. It features no increase in the tax rate from 2020.

Board member Mark LeMunyon said the Facilities and Grounds Committee wanted to schedule a meeting with Cape May City Manager Michael Voll to be updated on progress of the Lafayette Street Park project.

"The city in its reorganization has left us pretty much out in the dark," LeMunyon said.

Board member Anita DeSatinck asked if the Board of Education would resume ownership of the land if it were not developed by a certain date.

Board President Dawn Austin said she believed the city had two years to use the land or it would revert to the school.

School board member Sha-

ron Lee Kustra said the city had one year to procure funding to accomplish phase four or the property reverts to the school.

School board member Larry Reed said the city signed a contract with the school board one year ago. Board attorney Robert Fineberg said he would draft a letter to City Council.

Palombo said state-mandated standardized testing must take place between April 12 and June 11. Garguilo said he personally opposes having the standardized tests.

"The kids have been through enough this year, the teachers have been through enough this year, parents have been through enough," he said.

He asked how students who are receiving instruction remotely would be tested when the tests require a proctor. Garguilo said he thought some parents would opt out their children from the tests because of the stress factor.

"This is not the right time to do this," he said. "Unfortunately, our state has no control over this, this is coming from the federal government."

## LCMR going all virtual week after spring break

By JACK FICHTER  
Cape May Star and Wave

ERMA — Following spring break, the Lower Cape May Regional School District will implement an all-virtual schedule from April 12 to 16.

In a letter to parents, Superintendent Joseph Castellucci stated the decision to implement the schedule was to allow staff, students and

families with travel plans during the break the period of time necessary to adhere to recommended travel quarantines when they return home.

The district will return to an in-person, hybrid schedule beginning Monday, April 19.

If the state relaxes or eliminates travel quarantine requirements prior to the start of spring break, Castellucci stated he would rescind the all-virtual week and return to the hybrid in-person sched-

ule as originally indicated in the school calendar.

"While the idea of returning to in-person learning as originally scheduled is preferred, the number of staff and families that informed us of their out of state travel plans prompted this change to our schedule," he stated. "As we continue to navigate these uncertain times, our priority continues to be about the health and safety of everyone that comes into our schools each day."

The all-virtual daily sched-

ule for each school is posted on the district's home page as is other pertinent information regarding school operations during this pandemic including the meal distribution schedule for all-virtual week.

Students traveling out of state to areas other than Pennsylvania, New York, Connecticut, and Delaware, should quarantine for 10 days after their return. Students may return to school after seven days with a negative test taken no earlier than day three of their return.

## Mock trial team wins

Continued from Page A1

Mendham had twice that number.

But as the leader of Lower's team, Nick Frey, put it, "We wanted to bring greater statewide recognition to our school, our community and to South Jersey. We wanted to let the whole state know who we are and that we are more than just a resort and farm area. We're not just a bunch of rustics and surfer dudes down here."

Lower's team consists of student attorneys Frey (12) and Holly Karavanas (11) and witnesses Elise Heim (12), John Payne (12), Liv Longshore (11) and Anya Davids (11). It's longtime coach is former Cape May County Prosecutor Barbara Bakley-Marino, who has an extensive background as both a prosecution and defense attorney.

Bakley-Marino had high praise for her team.

"They're an extremely bright, highly motivated, wonderful group of kids. Working with them was inspiring, their intellectual excellence and commitment

to academic achievement was awesome," she said.

Most importantly she felt "they offer bright hope for the future."

Lower Cape May Regional High Principal Lawrence Ziembra had equal praise for the team's championship.

"We're tremendously excited about what they accomplished and are so proud of them. They've brought great honor to themselves, their school and their community. Beyond their academic ability and achievement, their hard work is very, very impressive and they're great young people also."

Four-year veteran and team leader Frey, whom Bakley-Marino praised for "giving his best opening statement of his career which was a key to our win," said the team was "tremendously proud and excited about winning the state championship."

"The pure joy and satisfaction over this culmination of years of hard work is tremendous. Our dedication and determination paid off," he said.

In a larger prospective, he noted: "Our win shows the beauty of our legal system when it works as intended. True justice is blind justice that allows the little guy (in this case Lower's team) to win on merit. That's how it was designed to be and how it should be."

Frey plans to attend Patrick Henry College in Virginia, majoring in American government and politics toward a career as a constitutional lawyer. Patrick Henry is one of the best schools in the nation in this field and has one of the best collegiate mock trial teams.

Liv Longshore is a junior who's planning to attend the University of Pennsylvania or University of California at Irvine to prepare for a career in the medical field. It was her first year on the team and she called it "amazing, a real academic challenge and so helpful in training" her to discipline her thinking. She served as a witness.

Charicia (Holly) Karavanas was Frey's co-counsel attorney. Bakley-Marino said she gave her best closing argument of her career in the finals. The junior plans to attend an Ivy League school or Bryn Mawr College in preparation for a law career. She felt the team's state championship was a tremendous reward for her three years on the team.

"This is the happiest moment of my life. I can't imagine anything better happening to me," she said. Like her teammates, she

hopes winning the championship inspires other students to reach their academic potential and to suppress a defeatist attitude about themselves and their school and community.

"We want to inspire them. If we underdogs can do it, they can, too. They have the ability but they need the positive attitudes," she said.

Senior John Payne was a witness in his second year on the team. He plans to attend Massachusetts Institute of Technology and major in math and computer sciences. He said he joined the team because he enjoys debating and is fascinated with the law.

"Mock trial really develops vital life skills including logical thinking, reasoning and reacting rationally to changing events. This is especially true of the cross-examination process," he said.

Like his teammates, he felt it was amazing that a small school from a small, socioeconomically depressed area could win the state championship.

Anya Davids is a junior in her first year with the team who served as a witness. She plans to attend either the University of Michigan or the University of Massachusetts at Amherst and pursue a career as an architect. She is still overwhelmed and in awe of the team's accomplishments.

"I still haven't fully realized that we won and the scale of what we've done. I'm so proud but I'm also almost speechless," she said.

She felt that beyond their basic ability and the great coaching they received, her team's secret to success is its closeness.

"We've grown to be like a family. We're so close, we're so supportive of each other, and we feed off each other's skills," she said, adding that she is eagerly awaiting the national competition.

"If we can win the state, why not nationals?" she said.

Frey said there is a greater achievement than the state championship.

"This was not just a win for us but for our school and our community. We want it to be a symbol of school achievement and source of community pride," he said. "The most important lesson to be learned from this is that kids from our school, people from our community, have the ability to succeed if they have the drive and will to succeed in whatever area or occupation interests them."

The national championships begin in mid-May.

Bank whenever  
you want.  
Our online tools  
& mobile app  
make it easy.



**STURDY**  
SAVINGS BANK

sturdyonline.com  
609-463-5220



**OYSER BAY**  
RESTAURANT & BAR

GREAT STEAKS and SEAFOOD

**BAR OPEN**

WEDNESDAY THROUGH SUNDAY

Starting at 4pm

**SERVING DINNER**

THURSDAY THROUGH SUNDAY

Starting at 5pm

**MAKE EASTER  
RESERVATIONS**

Opening at 4pm

615 Lafayette Street • Cape May, NJ • 609-884-2111

www.OysterBayRestaurant.com



Fine Furniture Accessories & Fun Stuff For Your Home

**coastal designer  
OUTLET**

FINTASTIC SAVINGS!  
10-70% OFF

Quality Designer Close-Outs and Floor Models by



SPECIAL  
ORDERS  
AVAILABLE

DELIVERY  
SERVICE  
AVAILABLE

HUGE  
TENT SALE  
March 28 to  
April 3

LAMPS  
and  
ARTWORK

609-624-1544

"We're right behind the Wawa"

556 Sea Isle Blvd. in Ocean View Plaza

Mon. thru Sat. 10am - 5pm • Sun. 11am - 4pm

CLOSED EASTER

