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## **Darien High School Principal Ellen Dunn Welcomes Students, First Day of School is Thursday, Aug 29**

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Most Darien High School students have been or will be on campus yesterday and today, Tuesday, with seminars on substance abuse, orientation for new students or sports practice before the start of the regular school year across the school district on Thursday, Aug. 29.

Principal Ellen Dunn officially welcomed students back in an online document mentioning unchanged rules but also mentioning changes since classes ended in June for the previous school year.

*Here are excerpts from Dunn's message, including what's scheduled for Wednesday's new student orientation and Thursday's first day of school, followed by what's new this year at DHS. Information that wasn't labeled as new or about events on Wednesday and Thursday was removed:*

**WEDNESDAY: Freshmen, New Student Orientation**

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"Freshman and new student orientation will take place on Wednesday, Aug. 28. The orientation program will begin at 9 a.m. in the DHS Auditorium, following the iPad distribution [see "New Devices" below] in the North and South Gyms from 8 to 8:45 a.m.

Freshmen will pick up a name tag in front of the auditorium with their group number, and will sit with that group and their Link Leaders and Advisors for the brief presentation.

Afterwards, freshmen will be escorted by Link Leaders to their Advisory location for welcome activities and they will follow an abbreviated schedule which allows them to meet each of their teachers.

All freshmen will meet for lunch in the cafeteria, provided by DHS, and the program will conclude at 1 p.m.

New grade 10-12 students will be greeted by members of the New Wave Club; after the auditorium presentation at 9 a.m., they will go to the Chill Zone together for a welcome breakfast and a building tour, ending at 11:00 a.m.

The DHSPA [DHS Parents Association] will provide coffee for parents in the Cafeteria from 8:00 to 8:55 and families will be able to purchase DHS Spiritwear during this time.

Parents are invited to listen to the student orientation presentation from the Auditorium Balcony at 9 a.m. and to join us for a question-and-answer session on the Main Level after students depart to Advisory.

### **THURSDAY: Plans for Opening Day:**

"School opens on Thursday, Aug. 29 for all students. We will begin classes at 7:40 a.m. and follow an "A" day schedule. Detailed Back-to-School information is posted on the DHS website at [hs.darienps.org](http://hs.darienps.org) (please note the website address has changed).

"Please login to Aspen prior to school opening to complete the necessary tasks. Students will receive an email containing a link to their schedule on Monday, Aug. 26. When posted, schedules may be accessed by logging into Aspen, and clicking the PDF link under the "Published Reports" section.

"Students should print out the PDF schedule and bring it with them on the first day of school (or take a photo of it with their phone). Schedules will not be distributed at school. [...]

"Counselors will be involved in professional development and orientation for much of next week, so please reach out to them via email if there is an error in your schedule or you are missing a course. Counselors will be available on a drop in basis on Wednesday, Aug. 28 from 12:45 to 2:30 p.m.

## **WHAT'S NEW THIS YEAR**

*Here's what Dunn noted was new:*

### **New Assistant Principal**

A [new assistant principal](#), Mark Mazzone, replacing Adam Schoenbart, who resigned in July to take a job in the Chappaqua, New York school district.

"Mark comes to Darien after serving as assistant principal at the Institute for Collaborative Education, a New York City public school, for seven years. Mark graduated from Amherst College with a Bachelor's in Economics. He received his master's [degree] in secondary math education from Pace University in New York and his School Building Leadership certificate from New England College."

### **Health Curriculum**

"A significant change in the Health Curriculum will be introduced this year and students will participate in Health and Physical Education during separate semesters.

"All Health classes are designed by grade level in order to share content that is developmentally appropriate for our students. Juniors and Seniors will participate in Health during the first semester and Health will be offered to Freshmen and Sophomores during second semester.

"In concert with our Guidance seminars and our Advisory program, the new Health curriculum will help our students develop the skills necessary to lead healthy, balanced lives. The curriculum is innovative, comprehensive and skills-based and creates opportunities for learning to occur in relation to all components of health (social/emotional, mental, and physical)."

### **New Devices**

"Our Information Technology Department and DHS Technology Committee have been preparing for the final phase of the 1:1 iPad initiative. Freshmen and new students in grades 10-12 will receive their devices on the morning of [Wednesday] August 28 from 8 to 8:45 a.m. in the North and South Gyms at DHS.

"During this time, incoming parents and their students will be able to complete all components of the Aspen workflow sign off; learn about using and taking care of the iPads, case, and the Logitech crayon; have the opportunity to sign up for the district's new, optional but encouraged device insurance; and get helpful hints for iPad accessibility.

"Students who are unable to pick up their devices on Aug. 28 will be able to do so on Aug. 29 throughout the school day in the Library, as long as both parents and students have completed the Aspen workflow sign

offs."

### **More Security Cameras**

"[W]e have added security cameras around the campus, which are accessed by our administration, campus monitors, and school resource officer.

"All visitors will be allowed to enter the building at the Main Entrance after the campus monitor at the Welcome Center reviews a live video feed and buzzes them in.

"Once in the Welcome Center, visitors will provide a driver's license and receive a badge indicating that they are approved for access to the school. Students and staff will participate in monthly drills to insure that we are all prepared to respond to emergencies, if they arise."