



October 12, 2015

Dear Parents,

We are writing to you in response to the accusations that have been made against the school system around how we celebrate Halloween in the schools. The misinformation around the decisions the school made tied to celebrating Halloween is huge, and the spreading of untruths by parents and members of the community very disturbing.

First, for the last five years, the schools have been configured as Grade K-2 and Grade 3-5 schools. Halloween parades were held in the K-2 schools. They were not held in the 3-5 schools. With the reconfiguration of the schools to Pk-5 at the start of this school year, the elementary principals came together with me to talk about celebrating Halloween. The thoughtful discussion centered on creating a Halloween celebration that would be inclusive of all children, would involve parents, and perhaps the larger community, would engage children in games, activities and more. Many of the schools had held such events for years with much success. PTAs were integral to the planning and executing of these events. Ultimately, all eight principals, with my endorsement, chose to focus their energies on a family Halloween celebration, and forego the 20 minute parade in school.

The thinking behind this decision was that a family event in the early evening would enable all who wanted to be a part of a Halloween celebration to do so. Meanwhile, children who for religious or cultural reasons would not take part, could easily, and without stigmatization, not attend the event. In addition, in recognition of many working parents who have difficulty leaving work to come to school, an evening event would allow them to be present with their children. Finally, for children who may not have a costume to wear at school, a family evening event that centered on fun and games, and not on one's costume, seemed far more appropriate.

Sad to say, while careful and sensitive thought went into the decision to celebrate Halloween at a school/PTA-sponsored major event outside of the school day, there are those who unmercifully attacked the decision, falsely accusing the Milford Public Schools for banning Halloween. We have been accused of being un-American, of denying children participation in an American tradition, and that we should be ashamed. We struggle to understand why we should be ashamed about the Halloween celebration that each school/PTA is sponsoring, wherein children are encouraged to wear costumes, will be given candy, will spend an hour or more in fun and games. Our feeling is that the planned school/PTA event in each school is far more reflective of the values of the American culture in that "*family*" and "*children*" are being celebrated through a Halloween gathering.

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There are those who feel a 20 minute parade is more important, however, and its elimination is contributing to the demise of Milford as a city and Milford as a community, as well as the demise of the Milford Public Schools. Those of you who have children in our elementary schools know how untrue these accusations are. You know the values of our building principals, their love of their children, their unwavering commitment to doing the best they can in serving them. The false accusations that have been made are irresponsible, and the antithesis of what we try to teach children.

The Principals and I are about educating our children. With this in mind, knowing that the issue of Halloween is detracting from what we are truly about, and our time with our children around teaching and learning is most important, we have decided to reverse our decision. In an effort to move forward, the Pk-5 schools will hold a Halloween parade on Friday morning, October 30<sup>th</sup> at 8:45-9:05 for early start schools; and 9:15-9:35 for late start schools. More information about the parade route, parameters around costumes, and other details will be forthcoming from individual principals.

We wish to thank the PTAs for their incredible investment in the family Halloween events that have been or are being planned for each of the schools. Your time and careful planning are so valued – and will guarantee a wonderful experience for every child in attendance.

Sincerely,



Elizabeth E. Feser, Ed.D., Superintendent of Schools

In concert with:

Jeffrey Burt, Assistant Superintendent for Teaching and Learning

and the

Elementary Principals:

Melissa Currier, Mathewson; Cliff Dudley, Orchard Hills; Amy Fedigan, Calf Pen Meadow;  
Carrie Keramis, Pumpkin Delight; Gail Krois, Meadowside; Rose Marzinotto, Live Oaks;  
Sean Smyth, John F. Kennedy; Carole Swift, Orange Avenue