

Incoming Board President Betsy Bergen Shaughnessy's Comments – January 4, 2021

I would like to begin by recognizing the great job Ms. Petrie Barcelona has done over the past year. She took her responsibility to assure that all voices be heard despite the limitations of meeting during the time of Covid very seriously. She has both presented and listened to comments with compassion and respect and has used the input of the community to inform her actions. I want to thank her for her absolute commitment to our children and our schools.

Our job this year, above all others, is to do our very best to nourish the hopes and possibilities of each and every child in our community. We must do this with equity and understand that each child or family may not receive exactly what they wish; providing learning choices for parents reflects our desire to meet the widest possible range of needs. This Board and District administrators have heard the eloquent and passionate views of many in the community and have worked to respond. We have also served as advocates for those children whose families may not have reached out but whose children's needs deserve to be considered equally.

As we move forward I feel it is safe to say all of our deliberations and decisions will reflect a focus on our core responsibility – to put the needs of children first.

Our “priorities” for the upcoming year are many and each is important to the success of our district. I see three (3) that are critical to our moving forward and each demands a robust approach. We must:

- **Maintain our focus on high student achievement** for students whether in an in-person or remote learning environment and this includes addressing the gaps in learning progress resulting from the disruptions of the past year.
- **Hire a superintendent** who will:
 - Lead with a focus on student achievement through student-centered learning;
 - Facilitate communication and collaboration with community and staff in fulfilling the mission of the Lakewood;
 - Continue to build on initiatives designed to develop a more cohesive education continuum;
 - Recognize the wonderful and unique community in which we live.
- **Continue to identify and address equity gaps and omissions** in both course offerings and student support needs around diversity and inclusion. We need to be vigilant in this effort.

We will certainly encounter obstacles in the coming year; however, I am certain that this Board, Dr. Barnes, Mr. Zeman, our principals, teachers and invaluable support staff will devote themselves to our mission.

I also see many reasons to be hopeful as we enter a new year:

- Teachers have acquired the technical skills required for remote teaching and learning and have met the challenge with creativity and ingenuity.
- Tens of thousands of meals have been provided to our children by our Nutrition Services' staff who come to work every day to provide what so many of our children need.

- The diversity, Equity and Inclusion Taskforce has continued to meet to keep these important issues at the forefront. This is a group of 30-35 employees who come together to address issues.
- Access points have been established in schools to provide support for remote learners.

It will be my privilege to serve as Board president in the coming year and to serve with my fellow Board members – they are devoted to the Lakewood community, to public education and to our children.

I know we can meet the diverse needs of our students and our community by exhibiting the very same qualities of resilience and perseverance we work to see in our students. We can create the environment which allows our students to develop those characteristics of a Lakewood graduate that were identified through a community-wide process and discussion no matter the setting in which the learning is taking place.

I know that we will be much more successful if we approach each other with empathy, address our challenges through honest communication and creative thinking and accept that we will have to approach issues with a growth mindset and be prepared to be adaptable, rework, refine, and even reject plans in order to successfully move toward our goals.

Again, thank you for this opportunity to serve the community I cherish.

Betsy Bergen Shaughnessy
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