

Letter from Robb Gaskins



Dear Benchmark Community,

When you are deeply immersed in something, it is often difficult to see it objectively. But, if you are able to step back and look at it with fresh eyes, you have an opportunity to view it with clarity. During the past year, I had occasion to do that with many things. When I stepped back and looked at Benchmark School, I received confirmation of just what a tremendously unique, caring, and vibrant institution this is. It is filled with exceptional individuals who are working together to help our students learn to thrive as the school continuously evolves in exciting ways.

This perception reinforces why so many students, parents, and staff members express that it is difficult to imagine ever leaving such a special place. I completely understand that sentiment. As most of you know, in the past year, I faced a significant health challenge that I was able to overcome with the love and support of this amazing community. I cannot begin to express my gratitude for your generosity and kindness. I am truly blessed to have had that experience.

Energized by your support, I entered the school year ready to attain new heights with all of you, and that is just what we have done. We have continued to enhance our instructional program and institution, our students are blossoming, and there is much more to come. What I didn't fully appreciate at the beginning of the year is that my health journey is far from complete. While I remain cancer free, I still have a long way to go to fully recover. That is particularly noteworthy given that this position requires a substantial commitment of time and energy, and I have not learned to give less, so long as I am able. Beyond that, my health journey has presented me with the opportunity to step back, view my life with clarity, and re-evaluate my priorities and path. In that process, I can honestly say that my love for this school and community has only grown. At the same time, I realize that if I want to be in a position to contribute to the world in subsequent years as I hope to do, I need to dedicate a vast majority of my attention to my health and well-being. Consequently, at the end of this school year, I will be stepping down as the head of Benchmark School to focus on my full recovery.

I am pleased to share that I plan to remain on the Benchmark staff in a part-time role, helping the school move forward in alignment with our strategic plan. As such, I will continue to actively contribute to the school and help us move boldly into the future. What I know for sure is that Benchmark will continue to soar, regardless of my position at the school. Benchmark is filled with extraordinary people who are transforming students' lives every day, and nothing about that will change. The drive to excel has been part of the DNA of this community for the past 50 years, and I know it will continue to be a fundamental component of this school long into the future. As for now, we still have a lot of great things to accomplish during the rest of this year, and I look forward to working with you to make them happen.

Thank you for your support.

Warmly,
Robb

Letter from Ben Rogers '95



Dear Benchmark Community,

With gratitude for his enduring contributions to our community, the board of trustees announces that Robb Gaskins will step down as head of school, effective June 30, 2019, to fully focus on his health.

Beginning in the coming weeks, the board of trustees will commence a comprehensive and transparent search for Benchmark's next head of school – someone who will advance the school's mission while honoring its storied legacy. During the search process, the board will appoint an interim head of school who will lead Benchmark during the 2019-20 school year.

During Robb's tenure, Benchmark has made significant advances in instructional practices, created a state-of-the-art innovation lab, expanded scholarship and tuition assistance funding, and developed the school's current strategic plan, "Setting New Benchmarks." Robb has consistently set a tone of caring, kindness, and positivity while providing a strong example of how to face adversity with determination, perseverance, and grace.

As we prepare to celebrate Benchmark's 50th anniversary in 2020, I reflect on all of the students Benchmark has taught and the number of lives that our school – in partnership with a devoted community of parents, faculty, staff, and administrators – has impacted. While the school's strategic plan will guide our institution's path into the future, we will remain rooted in our fundamental goal established by Irene Gaskins in 1970: to provide a dynamic, research-based instructional program that develops lifelong learners, thinkers, and problem-solvers who are ready not just to face the next step, but every step their future holds.

As a proud alumnus, I thank Robb for the dedication, thoughtfulness, and enthusiasm with which he has led Benchmark over the past 12 years. I hope you will join the board of trustees in expressing gratitude for Robb's leadership, and in wishing him and his family the very best.

Warm regards,

Benjamin B. Rogers '95
Chairman of the Board of Trustees