

August 2018

Dear LMSD Families,

I hope you have been enjoying the summer break. It may seem hard to believe, but opening day for students is nearly here and we look forward to welcoming our new and returning students to school on Tuesday, September 4, 2018.

The beginning of the school year is always exciting. For students there are friends to be made, new knowledge and skills to be acquired and challenges to be met. Our teachers and staff are refreshed and full of creative ideas to enhance learning.

It has been a busy summer for District staff, principals were hired at Belmont Hills Elementary and Bala Cynwyd Middle Schools; two cafeterias were renovated and Lower Merion High School has a new turf. As we begin this academic year, I'd like to share some additional updates on recent, ongoing and upcoming District initiatives and developments:

### **Strategic Plan**

Our work continues to be driven by the *All Forward* Strategic Plan. Public updates on the plan are a regular part of the Curriculum Committee of the Board meetings throughout the year. You can read the plan on the District's website ([www.lmsd.org/all-forward](http://www.lmsd.org/all-forward)), along with information about the five strategic pathways and how those strategies guide our work. Many thanks to the committed professionals and community members who have invested time as part of the pathway teams. Each pathway team has specific explorations that include recommendations for future action, including innovative practices for the 2018-19 school year.

### **Enrollment Growth**

As of this writing, enrollment for the upcoming year stands at 8695 students, with more than 8700 students likely to be enrolled by the first day of school. LMSD continues to be the fastest-growing District in the Commonwealth and these numbers bear out the projections in the demographic studies commissioned by the District in 2017. You can read more about the District's enrollment planning on our website (<https://www.lmsd.org/enrollment-planning>).

### **Facilities**

In response to enrollment growth, the Board of School Directors approved an Agreement of Sale for the property at 1860 Montgomery Avenue as a site for a new middle school for grades five through eight. While due diligence work on that site has begun, final acquisition of the property remains dependent on the District finding additional space for athletic fields. The District is aggressively pursuing options to acquire that necessary space. Final acquisition will also require some approvals from the Township.

### **Cultivating a Positive Learning Environment: Policies and Regulations**

The Policy Committee of the Board has updated a number of policies which can be found on the District website under the Board section. One Policy that is likely to affect many families concerns attendance and reporting of school absences. Students are expected to be in school and students who have three or more unexcused absences in one year are considered truant. If your child needs to miss school due to illness, family emergency, medical or dental appointments, a religious holiday or other reason listed as “excused” in the Policy, you will now be able to use the LMSD Safe Arrival system to report that absence online or by phone. If you use the online system, a written note to the school will no longer be required. Additional information about this new system will be shared by your child’s school. We hope this new system will be more convenient and efficient for both families and attendance staff.

### **Ask the Superintendent**

I look forward to seeing you at this year’s “Ask the Superintendent” events, where we can continue, face-to-face, the important conversations about topics shared in this letter and any other areas of interest to you. These meetings are not only informative, they also play an important role in shaping our work as a District. Dates for these events are as follows:

September 13, 2018 @ 8:30 AM in the Administration Building – Board Room

November 18, 2018 @ 2:00 PM at the Academy Building, Bala Cynwyd, PA

January 10, 2019 @ 8:30 AM in the Administration Building – Board Room

March 3, 2019 @ 2:00 PM at the Academy Building, Bala Cynwyd, PA

May 2, 2019 @ 8:30 AM in the Administration Building – Board Room

Finally, if you are new to the District, Welcome! I think you will find LMSD is a great place for your children to learn and grow. Your school’s administration, Home & School Association (HSA) and our District-wide Interschool Council are great resources that can provide guidance on ways to become involved in our schools and classrooms. I also urge you to follow the District on Facebook (@LowerMerionSchoolDistrict) and Twitter (@LowerMerionSD) to learn more about the wonderful activities going on throughout the year.

Thank you for entrusting us with your child’s education. We look forward to a year filled with great success, meaningful growth and learning.

Sincerely,



Robert Copeland  
Superintendent