

Mt. Lebanon School District
School Board President Report – October 19, 2015
Lawrence M. Lebowitz

Good evening. Before proceeding any further, let me take this opportunity to thank the administration for organizing the High School dedication celebration last Sunday. It was a wonderful day for our entire community attended by more than 500 people. It was, perhaps, the most beautiful day of the year which was entirely consistent with our new High School and all of the events that took place that afternoon. Although we tried to include everyone in our remarks that day, let me now specifically also recognize the PTAs (including our PTA Council), the Municipal Administration (and, in particular, Steve Feller), the Mt. Lebanon Fire Department, the Mt. Lebanon Police Department and anyone else we may have missed who helped make this project such a success.

Talking about our Parent Teacher Association, at the beginning of each school year, we set aside time to recognize the many contributions made to our schools through the volunteer efforts of our PTA. The Mt. Lebanon School District is very fortunate to have ten active PTA units along with a well-organized PTA Council working in our schools. As with any effective organization, the leadership provides the focus. This is especially true of the PTA. We are pleased to give special recognition tonight to the PTA President and Council President who help us engage and involve our parents in so many ways to benefit our students.

Thank you for volunteering so much of your time, including time away from your family, to advocate for all of the students in the District. We look forward to working with you this year and for many years to come. As I call your name, please come forward to receive well-deserved recognition for your efforts:

Julie Maselko – PTA Council
Cecelia Morello – Foster
Kristen Bruder – Hoover
Nikki Bovino – Howe
Amy Shannon-Spector – Lincoln
Christine Neavin – Jefferson
Moira Aulbach – Markham
Julie Toussaint – Washington
Colleen Frank – Jefferson MS
Bonnie Dougherty – Mellon MS
Lisa Silverman – High School

This month I enjoyed not one but two visits to our elementary schools. My first trip was to Markham where I was so pleased to see so many of the same great teachers (not to mention the principal) whom my own kids have had over these many years. Although I could report on many other aspects of my visit, I want to particularly mention how the Markham faculty effectively integrates technology into the day-to-day learning of their students. At Markham, and much like our other elementary schools, teachers

utilize web-based computer programs and applications as well as multiple types of print material and physical manipulative resources. For example, I personally saw students utilizing First in Math and Lexia programs on computers as well as manipulative materials accompanying our Investigations Math Curriculum. This technology, and many others like it, gives our students daily exposure to enhance overall learning experiences.

My visit the next week to Howe Elementary School was equally exciting. While, again, there are many other things I could mention, I need to once again focus on the incredible and truly inspiring work which we do for our most challenged students. Specifically, Howe houses our District's new ABA Classroom which is specifically for children with autism and life skills needs. The program uses an individualized Intensive Teaching Model based on Applied Behavioral Analysis (ABA). The ultimate goal of the program is to teach essential communication and behavioral skills to eventually enable these students with limited verbal skills to fully participate in the regular education classroom. Various related services like speech therapy, occupation therapy and adaptive physical education are integral components to this program. Ms. Aja Weston and her team of outstanding aides receive specialized training and support from PATTAN Consultants which is a special program supported through the Pennsylvania Department of Education. In fact, the PATTAN Consultants conducted a rigorous visit and fidelity check resulting in the award of a very high rating to this startup

classroom. It is, again, yet another example of how Mt. Lebanon stays true to our guiding principle of providing the best education possible to each and every student.

Finally in this regard, and at both Markham and Howe, I was able to see the beautiful murals and drawings created by both our art teachers and students. In these schools, along with each of the other five elementary schools I visited, they help to create a very comforting and welcoming environment that permeates throughout the entire school building. Thanks to Principals Rob Friel at Markham and Michelle Murray at Howe for making me feel so welcome and providing yet another inspiring morning visit to our schools.

Last week I had the honor of making a presentation with Dr. Steinhauer at the Pennsylvania School Board Association Annual Conference in Hershey. We presented on the importance of the relationship between the School Board President and the Superintendent in achieving success for our District as a whole and children in particular. It gave us an opportunity to showcase what we oftentimes take for granted in Mt. Lebanon and realize how well we are regarded by our sister School Districts. At the same time, it gave us an opportunity to give back to those Districts and simultaneously learn some things from them which can and will improve our own performance.

Let me also take this opportunity to congratulate Ms. Birks on her excellent showing in the election for President-Elect of PSBA. Although she did not win, Ms. Birks garnered more than 40% of the vote which, given her lack of name recognition in this state, was truly an outstanding showing and representative of the contributions that she has made and, more importantly, will continue to make for the public education system in Pennsylvania.

Finally, I would like to extend a quick “shout-out” to our numerous High School teams, band and various performing arts groups. Like my colleagues, I have had an opportunity to watch several of them perform and compete over the last two months and always walk away with a sense of pride, not only at how well our kids compete/perform but, also, conduct themselves in public. We have a lot to be proud of in our District and it all begins with our amazing kids. Good evening.