

August 2019

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. We look forward to welcoming our new and returning students to school on **Tuesday, September 3, 2019**. It has been our plan over the past several years, to reduce the costs and amount of paper circulated at the beginning of the year by making this an electronic “Welcome Back” notification. Therefore, **this will be the last year of the mailing**. All letters, information and forms etc. will be found on our website beginning the 2020-21 school year. This “Welcome Back” letter will be done in an email blast to families and will include dates for access to information on our website. As in the past, any family that would like a paper copy of the information can request this through their child’s school.

The beginning of the school year is always exciting. Our students embark on a journey of making new friends, acquiring new knowledge and meeting new challenges. Our teachers and staff are refreshed and full of creative ideas to enhance student learning. Among the exciting initiatives for this year, our One Book, One LMSD exploration of “The Little Book of Lykke,” in which all students will reflect and consider the happiness and wellbeing of people throughout the world.

It has been a busy summer for District staff. Merion Elementary School’s new Principal, Dr. Toby Albanese, and Bala Cynwyd Middle School’s new Principal, Ms. Sarah Stout, have been getting ready to welcome students and staff to their schools. Across the District, gym floors have been polished, roofs have been repaired and new classrooms added to accommodate our increasing enrollment.

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

All of our work continues to be driven by our Strategic Plan, *All Forward*. This year, a number of Focus Explorations will be brought to scale. These include an upcoming recommendation to the Board on the subject of Sleep and School Start Times; establishing community partnerships with local organizations such as the African American Museum of Philadelphia, The Barnes Foundation and the Lower Merion Conservancy; developing Digital Portfolios to enable our students to reflect on their work; and changing grading practices, elementary report cards and homework practices to better align with our goal of redefining student success. 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).

Enrollment Growth and the New Middle School

As of this writing, enrollment for the upcoming year stands at 8778 students, with more than 8900 students likely to be enrolled by the first day of school. We continue 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 2018.

Plans are moving ahead for a new middle school for Grades 5-8, which is set to open in September, 2022. Demolition of the existing buildings is about to begin on the school site at 1860 W. Montgomery Avenue in Villanova, as the architects work to finalize plans for the physical structure and a committee of educators is examining how the curriculum can be updated across all of our middle schools to best serve our students in grades 5 to 8. The location of field space for the new school has also been finalized. In the coming year, you'll receive updates on the plans and learn of opportunities for community input as we embark on this exciting project. You can read more about enrollment planning and the new middle school on our website (<https://www.lmsd.org/enrollment-planning>).

School Safety and Security

This year, security guards will be in place in all ten of our schools. The guards will be using the Raptor® system to check in visitors. They will also monitor the live security cameras to safeguard against intruders on our campuses. Starting this year, we will also be using Raptor's Volunteer Management System to keep track of volunteer clearances and volunteer opportunities for parents/guardians and community members. Volunteers play vital roles in our schools and we are appreciative that so many of you are willing to share your time and skills with our students. Anyone interested in volunteering in our schools should fill out an online volunteer application, even if your clearances (as a volunteer) are already on file with the District. You can find the updated information on obtaining and submitting clearances on our website (<https://www.lmsd.org/community/volunteer-clearance>).

Ask the Superintendent

Finally, I hope I'll see 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 19, 2019 @ 8:30 AM in the Administration Building – Board Room

October 13, 2019 @ 1:00 PM at the Academy Building, Bala Cynwyd, PA

December 5, 2019 @ 8:30 AM in the Administration Building – Board Room

February 9, 2020 @ 1:00 PM at the Academy Building, Bala Cynwyd, PA

April 1, 2020 @ 8:30 AM in the Administration Building – Board Room

I hope you enjoy the final days of the summer break and look forward to a productive year ahead in our District.

Sincerely,



Robert Copeland
Superintendent