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September 3, 2019

As the principal of Bancroft Elementary, a DCPS Title 1 school in the Columbia Heights-Mt. Pleasant communities, I have witnessed firsthand for seven years Maret's unwavering and unconditional commitment as they give of their resources and time to provide my students with free, enriching learning experiences and activities. For 20 years, through Horizons Greater Washington, Maret has been investing into the futures of children from under-resourced circumstances all throughout the District of Columbia. Horizons at Maret has served hundreds of Title 1 students from Bancroft and other public schools, where they receive rich academic instruction in literacy and STEM-based disciplines, while attending yearlong weekend programming and a six-week summer camp on their campus.

In light of the recent attention Maret has received for securing use of a DPR-run facility at Jelleff, it is hard to imagine arguments aimed at pitting public and private school children against each other, when for over two decades Maret School has demonstrated their commitment to over a thousand DC public school students. Evidenced by its mission of being an inclusive organization, I, a Latino parent, DC resident, and male educator of color, found it necessary to have my own child apply and become a vested member of their school community.

In addition to the lifelong memories that Bancroft students develop through Horizons, the impact on their lives would fill the pages of countless biographies. Children not only come back from this program celebrating the fun they had as elementary and middle school students, telling stories about learning how to swim, ride a bike, or build a rocket, they return in high school as camp counselors en route to successful college experiences. Writing and reading about them would be satisfying enough; however, nothing compares to the in-person testimonies of former Bancroft students at annual banquets as each one credits their success to an experience they had at a Maret-hosted program.

Maret is also having an immediate impact on Bancroft's astounding success in standardized testing outcomes. Since its inception five years ago, PARCC testing in DC has become the measure and rating system for determining a public school's ranking, of which five stars is the gold standard. Bancroft Elementary is one of only two Title 1 public schools in the District to receive a four-star rating or higher, and after this year's double-digit increases in both reading and math, it looks to become a five-star school, not only as the result of students' proficiency scores, but by nearly eliminating the achievement gap among its socio-economically disadvantaged subgroups, which represents 100% of the students' demographics that attend the Horizons program at Maret. It would be short-sighted to think that this partnership did not have a direct impact on these results.

These are but a few highlights of ways that Maret impacts communities outside of its immediate area, an example of its selfless commitment to all children in DC, not just its own. Furthermore, none of this is possible without Maret opening its doors to other organizations and investing in the renovation and upkeep of city-run facilities so that thousands of its residents can enjoy quality outdoor experiences.

Arthur Mola, Principal – Bancroft Elementary School