

Incoming Board President Michael J. Callahan's Comments – January 3, 2023

I am truly honored to be your incoming Board of Education president. I sought a seat to this board to bring my experiences and perspectives as a community member, as a parent of three children in the district, and as a public sector professional to represent this community to the best of my ability. I am now grateful to have the opportunity to serve as President of this Board of Education and committed to the requirements of the position.

Outgoing President Betsy Bergen Shaughnessy has served as the Board's leader for two years. I believe I speak for all my colleagues in appreciation for her fulfillment of the duties of president during that time. Her service in the role for two years allowed for needed consistency warranted by the times. Mrs. Shaughnessy's experience, poise, and advocacy for public education were and are exemplary. In her consecutive terms as Board President she was highly effective, as she has been for her time on the Board of Education.

In addition to outgoing President Shaughnessy, I would like to acknowledge colleague Ms. Emma Petrie Barcelona, who was a steady figure as Board President during a very challenging time of the pandemic, the calendar year of 2020. Ms. Petrie Barcelona brings so much experience and leadership to the table as well.

We are also fortunate for the service of now Vice President, Ms. Linda Beebe, and Board Member Ms. Nora Katzenberger. The five of us bring a wide variety of experiences and perspectives and are committed to working together with the administrative team to maintain an environment where all students can thrive.

It is a responsibility of the Board to hire and evaluate the superintendent and treasurer and to ensure they have the resources needed to effectively lead the district. In conversations with parents, teachers, administrators, paraprofessionals, maintenance and custodial staff, I am continuously reminded of how dedicated and effective our leaders are. Hiring a new superintendent during the pandemic was a challenge for the Board. I am so grateful we had such a strong internal candidate, and I am so impressed by Superintendent Maggie Niedzwiecki's leadership and her dedication to Lakewood.

The fiscal stewardship and stability in the role of treasurer that our long time financial executive Kent Zeman brings has been quite comforting, particularly in recent years. Thank you, Mr. Zeman, for all that you do.

We have a community that demonstratively supports public education and this district. We do not take that for granted, and recognize the high expectations that must be met in order to maintain that type of support. That support comes from the taxpayers and voters, but also the many volunteers who serve on commissions, committees, in booster organizations, PTO and PTA groups as well as the Lakewood Rangers Education Foundation (LREF). We certainly recognize and appreciate all of that.

We have a team of dedicated teachers and paraprofessionals that are second to none. I see it firsthand in the experiences of my children and I hear about it from so many in our community.

I would also like to recognize the work of our coaches, band leaders, and activity moderators, many of whom are also teachers. There are so many life lessons learned on the field and through co-curricular activities that help form and influence young people for the better.

I would also like to recognize the maintenance and custodial teams as well as all other administrators, support staff, and employees of the district for the great work they do on a daily basis.

The sum of the parts, is that we are a welcoming district that meets children where they are at and challenges them to reach their potential, all guided by the community's vision of a Lakewood graduate and our vision of a Lakewood educator.

With all that positive momentum of the District, we are not without challenges. This Board will continue to work to address the challenges of the day, by supporting our leaders and giving them the tools they need to succeed, and by approving and advocating for policy that puts public education for all as a priority.

Again, I am grateful to my colleagues and to the community who allows us to serve, and look forward to serving as Board President this calendar year.

Michael J. Callahan
January 3, 2023