

To: Our West Jefferson Hills School District Faculty

Good morning. I would like to welcome back all of our returning staff. To all of you who are new to West Jefferson Hills this school year, I would like to extend to you the board's warm welcome and best wishes for a successful and productive year for all.

I appreciate how many of you must feel now that the summer has flown so quickly by, and given that many of you probably have numerous items on your long summer to-do lists that still remain undone.

I would like to sincerely thank you for your expertise and patience in teaching my three children over the past years. They have now embarked on their post secondary and career paths, and I thank you for providing them the solid educational foundation that has allowed them to believe in themselves and to actively strive to reach both their personal and their professional goals.

This in-service for our return to school marks not only the beginning of a school year, but it also serves as a jumpstart on the road of our continuing journey together as the community of West Jefferson Hills. Let us take this time to embrace the new school year as an opportunity to review what we have accomplished so far, as well as to focus on where we can improve.

I am very fortunate to be here today with all of you, who have the special privilege and the awesome responsibility of working for our children. As teachers, you have the opportunity to interact with our children on a daily basis. Not only are you accountable for each student's instructional progress, but you also serve in a position where you can have an awesome, lasting effect on the future of a child, not just academically, but in the formation of the whole child. As educators, you are afforded the chance to become a guiding force in a child's life. You have the incredible opportunity to touch not only the mind of a child, but also the heart, the soul, the outlook, the self-confidence, and the memories. Please remind yourselves daily of the lasting footprint that you leave with each and every one of the children whose lives you touch each day, whether you are drying the eyes of the tearful five-year-old experiencing his first day away from Mom, or reasoning with the rebellious seventeen-year-old child temporarily trapped in the body of an adult. Please commit yourselves to making your lasting footprint a positive one.

My fellow board members and I are deeply committed to our students' academic achievements and successes. We, as a board, remain focused on attaining one overriding goal. We are steadfast in our determination to transform West Jefferson Hills from a really good school district into a "great" one. We now know from the data that what goes on in the boardroom has a direct effect on what takes place in the classroom. In recognition of our respective responsibility to our children and our community, we have taken measures to ensure that West Jefferson Hills' school directors remain focused on the common goal of student achievement and success, and we realize that this goal is reached by attaining much, much more than a benchmark test score.

With this in mind, I ask that you embrace a similar cause, because our students deserve the best that we all have to give. Help us transform our school community from good to great. We absolutely cannot reach this milestone without your support and without your commitment to educating the whole student. Please remind yourselves daily that great teachers don't teach subjects; they teach children; and they do so in all environments, not just during the class period. For the sake of our children, please aspire to be great teachers. As you prepare yourselves and your classrooms for the upcoming commencement of school, I ask each of you to take a moment to pause, look back to the past, and try to remember why you first chose to become a teacher. Having looked to the past, I ask you then to look to the future and embrace this upcoming year with that same zeal that led you to become an educator. Do it for the children – they are our future.

We as a District are making incredible strides. We can be proud of our academic and athletic reputation. We can be proud of the roles that we have played as our students move on from TJ to accomplish great things. We can be proud of our commitment to our students. In our efforts to strengthen and build on this commitment and to go from good to great, we must also recognize that we are all stakeholders in the West Jefferson Hills School District Community. Whether one's role is as teacher or nurse, custodian or secretary, administrator or school director or parent, we can only attain success in reaching our primary goal of student achievement by working together collectively as a team and by respecting one another's role in that process. No one can whistle a symphony. If we are going to reach our goal as a school district community, the entire orchestra must be present and prepared to play.

In whatever role that we have been placed, please recognize that each of us impacts the lives of our students each and every day.

Please know that we as a board welcome your thoughts and look forward to working with you. Thank you again for all that you do, and keep up the incredible work.

Shauna M. D'Alessandro

Board President