

February 22, 2023

Dear Superintendent Tucker:

Let this letter serve as my resignation from the position of Principal of Laconia High School, effective April 21, 2023. I recognize this is viewed by the district as a breach of the contract and because of that I will be forfeiting the vacation days I have accrued while serving the district since the death of the former principal, Mr. Bennett. I came back to Laconia specifically to ease that tragedy of that loss, to offer structure and support to this great high school as it coped with that loss and in many ways to help transition the program back to "normalcy" following the pandemic. That mission has been accomplished at this point in time and the district has unanimously selected an outstanding new Principal. Having been away from my family / home has been exhausting, physically and mentally, and I owe it to them and myself to make the transition home sooner rather than later. I also feel strongly that my departure is important for allowing the new administration to truly take charge and move forward. I was brought in as an interim Principal with a specific mandate and it is time to let the new leadership assume their role shaping and leading the vision of Laconia High School.

It is my belief that I am leaving Laconia High School in a better place than when I arrived back on the Sachem Nation Campus in October of 2021. We have worked diligently to regain the structures and supports that were lost during the pandemic. We effectively increased the communication and supervision needed to support students as they work to reclaim the time, learning and habits that were lost during their time away from traditional education. Because of these improvements, students more clearly understand the expectations of our school community along with the "what, why and how" of succeeding in this program. The community of Laconia also has a better understanding of the school and its needs based on the effective communication that we published throughout the summer of 2022. To summarize, the school is in a place where the pursuit of academic excellence is available and accessible to them once again.

Our work in structuring the learning environment has been supported by the work of administrators and school leaders looking at data and addressing the needs in very transparent manners. The hall monitors, funded through ESSER, have been a central component of our enhanced community supervision. Their work has completely shut down the damage to our bathrooms, grouping / hiding in the bathrooms as well as other forms of inappropriate behavior that previously existed. Students don't just feel safer; they are safer in our school now because they know caring adults are at a place where they need to be.

The addition of Springapalooza has also helped students holistically celebrate the Sachem community at a much needed time and serves as an additional opportunity to integrate "Sachem Nation" standards along with Homecoming and Winter Carnival each year. We have also worked to integrate staff and students together, collaboratively, in some of these activities. Finally, thanks in part to a change in leadership in Project Extra, we have exponentially grown our after school programming, increasing it ten fold in participation in just one semester and

going from 3 clubs to 26 in that time. I humbly thank LHS teachers for their commitment to students for making this happen.

The work of Ms. Hinds, our 6 - 12 ACTL (and soon to be Principal of LHS) along with our school's department heads, has also resulted in the schools' renewed embracing of Literacy through the instructional philosophy espoused by Schmoker, specifically Read, Discuss and Write. This has become a constant part of our academic culture and practice, especially with the development and implementation of Discussion Protocols presented through faculty meetings, department meetings and PLCs and teachers have embraced this. This movement toward Schmoker is reminiscent of the work accomplished in 2012 - 2016. Because of this work, we are now seeing academic performance move in a positive direction in our NWEA data and academic grade performance.

Additionally, this school has fully invested in the vertical model that strives to ensure every Sachem has a clear plan for "what's next" after graduation. The Future Learning Pathways Initiative is similar to our work from the past; what we then referred to as The Four Year Vertical Plan. However, it is now accompanied by greater structure and resources, including credentialing opportunities that are embedded into curricula, Xello, Career Exploration Classes and increased relevance structured into courses that require students to explore the future to which they aspire, two examples of which are Communiversity and F1. All of these improvements increase the likelihood that Laconia students will acquire the traits of Portrait of a Graduate. They also serve my personal / professional mission of moving this school community toward the universal pursuit of academic excellence.

I am proud of what has been accomplished thus far; the students and staff responded to my leadership of this school during a very difficult time. In many ways, I am also happy with how the community at large responded to these initiatives, all of which must be sustained. Fortunately, the decision to hire Lisa Hinds as the next principal ensures the continuation of these initiatives that she has been a big part of and we have been working collaboratively throughout all of these efforts.

I thank Laconia for this opportunity to serve the youth and families of this great community. It has been my honor and I am confident that I leave my position knowing the successor is more than capable, especially with the support of the district and the community.

As Always, Go SACHEMS

Jim McCollum