



Engage. Inspire. Prepare.

Office of the Superintendent

Becky J. Berg, Ed.D.

May 18, 2018

Dear Marysville School District Families,

It is with mixed emotions that I write this to you. I have decided to leave my position as Superintendent of the Marysville School District. As you know, I had a health scare this winter. In January, a large meningioma tumor was removed from my brain. Thankfully, it was non-cancerous and I am working through the recovery process. I'm not sure what will come next, but I plan to practice retirement to see if I can get the hang of it. Your outpouring of love and support during this scary time truly humbled my family and me and we are grateful for each and every one of you.

This episode has caused me to take stock of my life and my work with a renewed perspective. Serving as your superintendent for the past five years has been the highlight of my 32-year career. Yes, we went through a nightmare together in October of 2014, where we lost five young lives. None of us will ever forget their names and the impact this day had on so many. Our Marysville students are survivors – they are courageous and they inspire us daily.

During my time in Marysville, we learned some worthy lessons together as well, like the vital importance of tending to the mental health needs of our students. We know that although academics are important, we must also meet the needs of the whole child. Every child deserves to be safe, healthy, engaged, supported and challenged. Our faith community, partner agencies/organizations, educators and families all know that raising happy, equipped, and whole children will change our world for the better.

Over the past five years we have experienced the twin injustices of prejudice and poverty. Our families have become more diverse racially, religiously and culturally. Many also struggle with finding food, shelter and work to support the basic needs of their family. A school district can't fix all of this, but we try, and I can speak for our team of phenomenal educators that we will *never* give up. In the past five years we have asked, "Why NOT Marysville?" while we worked to improve the rigor of coursework, doubled down on teaching every child to read by the end of first grade, lowered class sizes, increased daily attendance, and improved graduation rates.

Our district became the first in the state to mandate implementation of tribal sovereignty curriculum that more appropriately represents the local culture and history of the Salish Coastal people and The Tulalip Tribes. We also hired a director of diversity to provide ongoing training for staff in confronting bias. She and her team advocate for continuous federal funding promised on behalf of our tribal children. We totally overhauled our Special Education department, and have increased access to general education settings for our students with special needs. We have taken a close look at what it means to support all students no matter what odds are stacked against them. We have removed barriers to their success where we could – and our district is not finished yet.

We also began providing the SAT, a test required for most college applications and almost always paid for by families, to all of our 11th grade students at no cost. This commitment has also enabled us to grow our AVID program, which as of next year, will be available for students in fifth through 12th grade. AVID is a proven system of educational approaches and experiences that help demystify the college-going culture for those who may see it as an out-of-reach goal. As a result, and in the last two years alone, more than 40 seniors graduated from the program, and more than half were first generation college-going students. Preparing our students for whatever path they choose after high school has also been on the forefront as we bolstered opportunities in career and technical education to provide more resources for technology and trade pathways.

Because of *your* 'YES' vote on two levies, we have been able to maintain our extracurricular programs and the arts, removed pay-to-play fees, and filled gaps left by state funding shortfalls. Because of your 'YES' vote, our students have amazing access to technology, and our teachers have first-class training on how to use such technology to connect learning to the world. And because of your 'YES' vote, we doubled down on maintaining and repairing our aging schools. We also have our financial house in order, with a rainy day fund and a sound annual budget that allows us to continue our efforts on behalf of students and is in alignment with Board-adopted funding priorities.

I think you can see now why this time in Marysville has been the pinnacle of my career and life's work. When I interviewed for this position I mentioned that I love stories where people come together to build a bridge or save a village. Thank you for letting me be part of such a story in the Marysville School District. It has been such a blessing in my life, and you will forever hold a place in my heart.

With Profound Gratitude,



Becky J. Berg, Ed.D.
Superintendent

"I am not sure what my future holds, but I know who holds my future" - Lee Strobel