



WEST CHESTER AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT

Educating and inspiring students to achieve their personal best

Dr. James R. Scanlon, Superintendent of Schools

April 6, 2021

Dear West Chester Area School District,

There are few greater joys than to help a child to learn and grow, and to know that you have had the ability to positively impact, in any small or large way, a child's life. The heart of any educator is focused on this mission and makes a career in education meaningful and rewarding. This has been my life's work, and so it is with very mixed emotions that I am writing to inform you that this summer I will be retiring as superintendent of this incredible school district.

For the last 12 years I've had the great privilege of leading the district, and the honor of working with some of the finest educators and people I've known. The West Chester Area School District is a school system and community fiercely committed to educational excellence and care for its students. We have tremendous heart for our kids! As a leader, my time here as superintendent has been both the best of times and the worst of times, and, after 39 years in K-12 public education, I know that it is time for another chapter in my own career and family life.

As you will read in the attached letter from our School Board, the Board will be voting later this month to appoint current Assistant Superintendent Bob Sokolowski as our new Superintendent this summer. Bob is an experienced and exemplary administrator and educator who has worked for 16 years in our district. He is a man of great integrity, principle and ability, and has a familiarity with our system that will be invaluable as we continue to work our way through the pandemic. I am completely committed to working closely with him through the transition to provide continuity, and will always be available to support him.

As a parent in this school district, I have been very proud and grateful to watch the growth and trajectory of my own children, and have been touched by the great care and support our teachers and other staff members have provided. I look forward to now attending parent conferences as a civilian! But, I will be no less proud. Now, I am also looking forward to having more time with my kids, and dedicating more time to my family life.

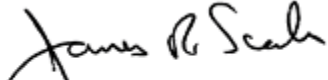
There is no question that the past year has been among the most challenging for our nation's schools and for all of our educators. Our community has found itself divided over politics and the pandemic. Ultimately, we all want what is best for our children, but the question of what that is or how to get there is another matter. As superintendent I have done my very best to thoughtfully listen to and consider a wide variety of perspectives and needs, to communicate as transparently and inclusively as I know how, and to focus us on truly student-centered goals. Decision making through the pandemic has been harder than ever, but I have tried to lead our team in a manner that is collaborative, optimistic, and always true to our mission.

I am so grateful for the opportunity to have served as superintendent in West Chester. The district has become my second family. Thank you to our talented, passionate staff from whom I have learned and become a stronger leader, to our School Board that is supportive, collaborative, and committed to always putting students first, to our dedicated, generous and caring parents who have bolstered and supported our work, and especially, to our students, who inspire me daily in so many ways.

You certainly have not heard the last of me, as I am sure this school year will continue to necessitate a number of district-level communications and challenges. Here's hoping you will no longer hear my voice at 5 a.m., however.

Thank you for your continual support for our schools, and thank you for reading this note.

Sincerely,



James R. Scanlon, EdD
Superintendent