



# Columbus School District

200 W. School Street | Columbus, Wisconsin 53925 | (920) 623-5950

**Columbus High School**  
1164 Famham Street

**Columbus Middle School**  
400 S. Dickason Blvd.

**Columbus Elementary School**  
200 Fuller Street

April 8, 2019

Dear Members of the Columbus School District Community:

Over the last several years, a number of important initiatives have taken place in the Columbus School District. For some, this change may cause concern because we want to ensure that what made our district so great in the past continues now and in the future. For others, change cannot come soon enough.

As a district, we must continue to raise the bar for what our students can achieve in the increasingly competitive landscape into which they will graduate. Although change is often hard, we must continue to move forward to prevent our students from falling behind. We also must be careful not to move too quickly. Everything we do as a district must be strategic to ensure that our efforts are sustainable, our work is aligned to priorities and we do not set the district backward by pushing forward too hard.

In the end, we believe we are setting the right tone by moving in a measured way. Below are some updates:

**Focus on Education:** The board continues to focus on offering a great education for all students. We have been and will continue to remain focused on improving test scores, evaluating our facilities, improving safety for our students and retaining and attracting the best teachers and staff. We have supported our superintendent and administration in their efforts to update the curriculum to increase academic achievement, which helps us ultimately produce community members who are college and career ready. We will continue this focus.

**Strong Leadership:** The board supports Board President Damm, Superintendent Deuman and our administrative team. Some decisions are not easy to make, but we are making them as a collective board. In some cases, individual board members may have different agendas, but the board acts as a collective body to address key decisions in the district. When individual board members cannot work within this structure, they often look to place blame. We will continue to work collectively in the best interests of our students.

**Addressing Problems:** The board welcomes constructive feedback and updates from our community members. Please know that while we do not directly respond to input during the community comment section of our board meetings, we do hear you. These comments are a



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valuable part of our future discussions and deliberations. However, we also encourage stakeholders to use the proper channels—starting with classroom teachers and building administrators—to address their concerns, particularly those related to the district’s daily operations.

Finally, we ask stakeholders and parents to refrain from providing individual board members with specific events and details regarding our students so that we can preserve our impartiality to fairly handle matters if a situation would ever come before the board in a formal process.

Accurate Information: In some cases, there is inaccurate information provided through various non-district forums about matters in the district. We encourage our families to recognize that information from non-district sources may be misleading or, in some cases, simply false. This can certainly have a negative impact on others, including our students. We encourage community members to contact the district for clarification on any such issues.

Every day, our youngest students take the Purple Hand Pledge: to do no harm with their words or hands. This is a principle we also aim to uphold as an administration and board, as we all know that words can be a very powerful weapon. We will continue to communicate with our stakeholders openly.

Our Teachers and Staff: We are fortunate to employ skilled and dedicated teachers and staff who work hard to meet the board’s expectations in serving our students. Those expectations are a reflection of the work in which our board is directly involved. Much like any other industry, there are times in the lives of teachers and staff when they choose to make a career change. The board has been receiving regular updates via our superintendent on a teacher-led initiative to update our compensation structure so that we can remain competitive and continue to attract and retain highly qualified professionals. The board has also prioritized ensuring our teachers and staff have the appropriate facilities and resources to carry out their work. We will continue to support our teachers and staff.

While there may be perceived struggles and shortcomings in our district, there are also many exciting and positive things happening throughout our schools. As a board, we eagerly await the conclusions of our Community Facilities Committee so that we can move forward with the culmination of more than two years of work to determine next steps for our district's facilities.



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This is an exciting time of change in our district. Please continue to attend and watch the board meetings, contact us for clarification and constructive feedback and extend your support to the whole community as we move forward in this exciting journey together.

Sincerely,

Cindy Damm, Board President

Mike O'Brien, Vice President

Mary Arnold, Clerk

Bill Braun, Treasurer

Julie Hajewski

Kelly Crombie