



Abington School District
Abington, PA 19001
Phone (215) 884-4700

July 9, 2018

Dear Members of the Abington School District Community:

I write to follow-up regarding the announcement by Dr. Amy Sichel, Superintendent of Schools, of her intention to retire on November 9, 2018. It was with great sadness that I accepted her retirement, when she shared it with me. Her tenure in the Abington School District has been the backbone to our success with students, our achievements in many areas, our ability to be fiscally responsible, and our focus to rebuild and renovate our school buildings. She brought many talents to the Abington School District over her 42 years of employment, with the last 18 as Superintendent of Schools. My intention in this letter is to share my thoughts regarding Dr. Sichel's career, as well as lay out a road map for a smooth transition as the Board of School Directors and I work to fill the position of Superintendent.

For a superintendent to spend her entire career in one school district is remarkable. Dr. Sichel was promoted over the past four decades through the positions of School Counselor, School Psychologist, Guidance Chair, Director of Pupil Services, Assistant Superintendent, and finally to Superintendent, the longest position she held in the District. During that timeframe her achievements within Abington School District and the community at large, as well as at the state and national levels are many. When she assumed the role of Superintendent, Abington School District was in a good position with quality programs and curricula and an outstanding faculty and staff; however, Dr. Sichel aspired to move the District forward working with the team of educators and the Board to ensure that all students had a rigorous college and career preparatory program, as the District moved from a tracked secondary curriculum, to provide opportunities for all students, including increasing inclusion for special needs children. This effort has been nationally noted and was featured in a textbook entitled *Excellence Through Equity* by Blankstein and Noguera. Dr. Sichel and Dr. Bacon, who was the Director of Curriculum, co-authored a chapter about the Abington School District's initiative, bringing recognition to the District. She has spoken on both the state and national level about equity, women in leadership, "Getting Results" and continuous improvement plans, among other timely topics in education. She did all this while always ensuring that the District ran smoothly, with the right leaders and staff members in place.

She asked the Board to take the noble step, in the beginning of her tenure as Superintendent, to hold town meetings to determine the community's desire to maintain neighborhood schools. This led to the rebuilding of Highland, Overlook, Roslyn and Willow Hill Elementary Schools. This was a bold move as people expressed their opinions, convincing the Board to move forward and borrowing the funds while still presenting a fiscally manageable budget to the Board. The long awaited athletic stadium was finally realized due to the fundraising efforts of Dr. Sichel and her staff with the Abington Educational Foundation and the Abington High School Alumni Association. We look forward to the plans she has helped to craft, as we renovate and build additions to Abington Senior High School.

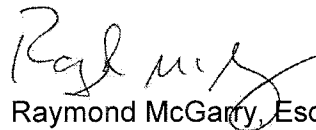
To these accomplishments, Dr. Sichel adds the presidencies of both the Pennsylvania Association of School Administrators (PASA) and of AASA, The School Superintendents Association. In both cases, she was elected by her peer superintendents, which further acknowledges her as a role model for success for superintendents across this country. She has spent countless hours on community boards, leading faculty and staff professional development, thinking of new and creative programs for the students of Abington Township and the Borough of Rockledge, such as Mandarin Chinese and increasing the number of Advanced Placement offerings, and other cutting edge initiatives. She did all of this with her husband Buzz by her side, while raising a family in Abington, with both of her daughters as proud graduates of the Abington Senior High School. The Abington School District is a better place for having benefited from Dr. Sichel's leadership, drive, motivation, creativity and talents as she led us through a recession, multiple contract negotiations, and a myriad of other challenges. The Board of School Directors and I thank Dr. Sichel for her service and leadership to the District and the community at large.

With all of this said, the Board now must consider the next steps to hire and retain her successor as Superintendent of Schools. Obviously, as we often do, we will consider internal candidates, for Dr. Sichel has always made succession planning for key leadership jobs a priority. The Board plans to meet immediately in Executive Session, which is an appropriate forum to discuss internal candidates. We will discuss our plan and options at the next meeting of the Board of School Directors on August 14, 2018. If we believe we need to look beyond the Abington School District, we will discuss our options to hire a search firm with a proven track record in recruiting school superintendents. The sooner we can fill this position, the sooner Board members, Dr. Sichel and I can support the new superintendent who assumes this most important position.

The Board of School Directors and I value the input of community members. We all have district email addresses, as well as a Board email box at Board@abington.k12.pa.us. Let us know your thoughts as we take on this very important task to fill the Superintendent position, in preparation for Dr. Sichel's retirement in November. While we do this, Dr. Sichel and her staff will be engaged in the normal routine of getting ready for the 2018-2019 school year, by preparing the schools, monitoring enrollment, hiring staff, and other preparations for the start of the school year.

Have a relaxing and fun summer.

Regards,



Raymond McGarry, Esquire
President
Board of School Directors