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Michael Thomas
Chief of Schools

August 1, 2016

Dear Barton families,

First, I want to take this opportunity to thank each and every one of you for your engagement with the Barton School community. The courage and commitment you demonstrate when you so openly share your thoughts, ideas and concerns is respected by everyone at MPS. It's important to me that you know you have been heard and we are taking your input into consideration as we make decisions about Barton.

Second, I want to express my appreciation for the social justice lens through which you evaluate events and issues at Barton. You consistently bring that invaluable perspective to problem solving in the educational environment and the community.

I believe the current discord that exists at Barton is the result of many factors that will need to be mediated and healed, but most specifically a systemic issue of central office administrative procedures and practices that created significant disruption to the learning community. This is not something I take lightly and I will ensure the accountability for such conditions will be addressed in a manner to not allow this to occur in the future for any school.

I believe that everyone at Barton, even as they may disagree, wants a solution that promotes harmony at the school. In an effort to achieve that outcome, we need to consider several questions:

What benefits and what harms will any course of action produce, and what alternative will lead to the best overall results? What rights do those involved have, and what course of action best respects their rights? Which course of action most successfully advances the common good?

I don't have perfect answers to any of these questions. But I am confident that by working together we can reach a resolution that honors the spirit of the Barton community and presents a fair approach to problem solving.

Principal Jonas Beugen was thrilled to be chosen to lead Clara Barton Open School, and his commitment to the students and staff only grew in his first year at the school. I am deciding to maintain Jonas Beugen as principal at Barton for the 2016–2017 school year, and I have let him know that my office and many others in administration will work with him and provide the support he needs to be successful for your students. As many of you may know, Jonas has a passion for collaborative problem solving, as evidenced by his certification as a Collaborative Problem Solving School-based provider.

My commitment to all of you is that this communication is just the beginning. Together we will create an ongoing dialogue to ensure you feel fully informed and your voice is heard. This will start with regular updates, meetings, and listening sessions. I can't promise we will always be able to make everyone happy,



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but you have my word that both Principal Beugen and I are committed to making sure Barton continues to be the unique and important school it has always been.

Again, I want to honor the effort that Barton families have made to be such a crucial part of the school and their children's education. Please look for additional communication from me to follow outlining next steps in the process of restoring the Barton learning community. My plan is to meet with parents and staff members during the week of August 8. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Michael Thomas
Chief of Schools
Minneapolis Public Schools