

## Letter to the Team #4 November 30, 2022

### Time for Reflection

One year ago, Jodi and I ran the Philadelphia half marathon for the third time. After that race, I included the following passage in my Letter to the Team: At every race, there is a story that will resonate with me for the rest of my life. This one will make me more reticent of my physical aches and pains, which I often tend to exaggerate. One of the runners was a cancer patient, whom Jodi and I ran beside for a brief portion of the race. She likely did not have much time to live; however, she talked incessantly and joyfully about every site that she passed, conjuring up memories of her past. She had five of her closest friends run the race with her, pushing her low-riding wheelchair as a well-practiced team. The joy that she experienced in the company of her closest friends brings tears to my eyes as I humbly write this letter.

### The Past Meets the Present

Life has a funny way of making you reflect backward, be in the present, and think forward. I would be remiss if I did not express my gratitude to Dr. Betsy Webb, former Superintendent of the Bangor School Department for her legendary leadership. Dr. Webb faithfully served the Bangor School Department for thirteen years. One tenet that I plan to move forward with in 2023 is to avoid the premise “that I have to go to work,” but rather to adopt the mindset “that I get to go to work.”



Dr. Webb’s legacy is embedded in each of you, and it is a joy for me that I am fortunate to work with the many dedicated and caring professionals that she had hired throughout the Bangor School Department. Many of you had assisted Dr. Webb with the creation of the ten-year strategic plan, and I believe that her task-oriented leadership made this the best, most thoughtful plan I have ever seen to enrich the education of all students. To be honest, I never had the opportunity to meet Dr. Webb in person; however, I can envision her work ethic and a laser-like focus on academic excellence through the following statement from Assistant Superintendent Dr. Kathy Harris-Smedberg:

*“Betsy Webb was a highly respected educational visionary and icon—an advocate for every child. Few have had such a profound impact on helping others, as she was tenacious in her commitment to improving education, not only at the local level, but also at state and national levels. An intelligent woman and lifelong learner, she was the person many would wisely turn to for advice and guidance, which was always offered with integrity and honesty.”*

## Running Your Best Race

The woman in the wheelchair that Jodi and I met just one year ago passed away in September. I imagine she had a smile on her face knowing she finished the Philadelphia half marathon in 2021 with her closest friends. Dr. Webb, as reported to me by some of you, was a fighter and finished her race as a successful leader who impacted countless students along her journey.



Jodi and I finished our fourth Philadelphia half marathon on November 19, 2022, with the knowledge that life is short; and the ability to finish together is a source of gratitude for the two of us. Life is precious; I encourage you to live each day to the fullest, and please know that I plan to live a great “adventure” during our time together.

In closing, the signage along the half marathon is quite clever. One of my favorite posters read, “Run faster; there are Taylor Swift tickets at the finish line.” Equally fascinating was a person completely dressed up as a chicken from head to toe holding a poster saying, “Let the chicken cross the road,” as 20,000 runners crowded the streets of Philadelphia.

Wishing you Happy Holidays with gratitude.

Enthusiastically yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "J Tager".

Jim Tager  
Superintendent  
Bangor School Department