

It's time to say goodbye. After 13 years at Lafayette, this is my last Tuesday Bulletin. I wasn't sure I wanted the responsibility of coming up with a new column each week but have found Lafayette to be so full of amazing children and events that it's been more of a pleasure than a chore. Many of you who have been here for the duration remember when I was a little edgy and even confrontational with DCPS and some of its arcane policies and expressed my frustration in the Tuesday Bulletins. I got a loud and clear tone it down message a few years ago and so I did. But this is my last chance before I go to have a small say and here it is.

First I want to thank the children of Lafayette for all they have done to enrich my life. Each and every day they are so excited to see me and yell out my name or wave at me as I enter classrooms and pass them in the halls. Do any of you work with 700 people who think you are just terrific practically all the time? I've seen your children at their best and in those 'what were you thinking moments'. I've pulled countless teeth and cleaned up thousands of scrapes. I've cajoled them into eating something new and sat with them when you were late and they were pretty sure no one was coming to pick them up. I have reassured them that no matter what they have done their parents are not going to kill them. Could possibly be very disappointed in what happened but "your parents do not want to go to prison". I have said Be Safe, Be Kind, Be Responsible and Work Hard each and every day and your children have internalized that message because if they can really apply those 8 words to their lives they will turn out just fine.

Second to the teachers, aides, office staff and everyone else who has chosen to make Lafayette their life's work. We have been through some happy times and times of great loss. Many of the teachers at Lafayette started their careers in teaching here; others are finishing up decades of service. That makes Lafayette a very different school from many in America right now. We have staff members at all stages and ages. That adds so much to the richness of what happens at this school. They are the people who should be written up in stories about "The Most Powerful People in Washington". They are the ones that know we do not teach 'data' in this new data-driven environment. They teach small children who could care less about PIA's, DC-BAS, and DC-CAS scores.

And now to my parent leaders and other community volunteers. There have been 14 different Home and School Association presidents who have worked tirelessly to provide enriched opportunities to their children and teachers. What a difficult job they have and how they have done it with such skill. To Jude Landis and then Jennifer Lanoff who showed up the last Tuesday of each month to hear another Tuesday Tour spiel and reassure prospective parents that their children will be okay at Lafayette. To Dr. French who has donated hundreds of dictionaries to our third grade students. To the parents who help with athletic events and Field Day. Who man the booths at the Spring Fair and do wild and crazy dances at the Spring Auction. Who edit this newsletter almost every week during the school year. Who volunteer for field trips, to read in classrooms, to edit the work of beginning writers. We couldn't do what we do without your support.

So as I leave Lafayette what is my wish for the school, the students, the staff and the new principal? It is the gift of Time. Dr. Broquard is coming this week to visit the students, staff and parents. This will be her first principalship in a new city and new school district. The learning curve will be very steep. Give

her the time to learn about the school, its traditions and community. Give her the time to learn about the staff and visit classrooms and find out about arts integration and peace class. Give her the time to meet her new students and listen to them and read the 100's of letters I have asked them to write to her about what they like about Lafayette. Give her the time to form her own opinions before you bombard her with requests. Let her see how the procedures work around here and decide what changes need to be made to match her style and tolerances. There will surely be some changes next year because like all principals she will put her own touches on the place. But the time to do this is essential to her success.

And give your children the gift of Time. This is a community that loves to be in control and with children you can be control of some things. But after working with children of all ages for 40 years, I have learned that many things occur on their clock not ours. We didn't pick the day they learned to walk or got a first tooth or finally grew some hair. We didn't pick the day they learned to talk. There are kindergarten students at Lafayette right now that look like toothless wonders while others in second grade are still waiting to lose that first baby tooth. It is the same with learning to read, write, do math, and move through space. We divide up our curriculum and find that most children are following along at about the same pace but not everyone and not all the time. So give your children the time they need to grow and develop at their own pace. The time to explore the world around them. Catch fireflies and dig in the dirt. To be bored out of their minds and realize that they can really find something to do. To read every book in a series and then look for a new one to tackle. Share with them the dumb things you did when you were growing up and let them know that your parents didn't kill you because after all here you still are. To stop worrying about being "college and career ready" and just ready for the next day is good enough right now. Because 40 years in schools has really just flown by. My children grew up and all of sudden became adults with careers and families of their own. I'm celebrating my 43rd wedding anniversary this summer. How did that happen. My husband and I are the old people in both of our families. All because of the passing of each 24 hour day. So please give the children of Lafayette the gift of time. Time from you and other family members. Time to discover who they are and what they want to do. And just maybe they will also get to spend 40 years getting to do something they love.