



December 1, 2020

Dear Latin Families,

It is not easy to write to you today, but the time has come: this school year will be my last as Principal at Washington Latin. Working with you, your children and this faculty has been the greatest gift an educator could receive. But it is time to pause to recharge my aging batteries and then take up the next challenge. This plan has been in the works for some time now, although the pandemic delayed my departure so that I could support Latin's transition through this extraordinary period. While we are not past the COVID crisis, it is time for me to return to these plans. I have so many emotions about this decision, but I do know that it is the right one, both for me and for the future of the school.

Leading this school for the past 13 years has been the greatest joy and commitment of my more than 30 years in education. I believe so deeply that we are doing the right thing by providing a challenging, classical education that is accessible to all. We are a model, however imperfect still, for what education in this country should look like. When I began my tenure, we had students in grades 5-8 only and were operating out of a mansion and a church. When I end, we will have graduated nine classes from our high school and are now one of the most sought-after schools in the city. Looking back, I sometimes just can't believe it.

During my time at Latin, I have tried to focus relentlessly on creating a culture of intellectual inquiry and fundamental decency. Without such a culture, a school cannot – and should not – stand. This culture work in schools has long been my expertise, and I found a school at exactly the right time to be able to practice what I believed. But these next ten years will require something different. The challenge will be applying a classical mission to a modern world badly in need of healing and improvement. This will be subtle and delicate work, as we need to embrace neither ancient traditions nor modern-day theories wholly but to incorporate the best of the past into the ideal of the present. I am sure that our mission can live fully in the current noble embrace of equity and equality, and I am sure that we have the people to bring this to fruition.

The truest test of any leader is the state of the enterprise when they leave. I hope it will be said that I committed myself to the training of the young leaders who will now take over the exercise in rigorous, equitable schooling that we have begun. I have every faith that the people with whom I have worked most closely are fully prepared and able to tackle the issues at hand and will continue to serve Washington Latin with their heads and hearts.

The only way to end this letter is to say thank you to the remarkable parent body that makes up this school. I have worked in five schools and no other group of parents compares in its dedication, trust, and honest commitment to the growth of our school. You have been so supportive, generous, and just plain fun. I applaud you for choosing a school that you too know is a model for what is possible in education.

With much gratitude,

Diana

Diana E. Smith, Principal