

In the Loop with the Lewiston-Porter Board of Education

By Jodee Riordan, Board of Education President

Welcome to Summer Vacation, Lewiston-Porter! The past week was full of pomp & circumstance, energy and emotion, and countless celebrations as students celebrated the end of a very unusual, long, and difficult year. Thank you to our faculty and staff, our students and parents, our community for getting through this most challenging year. We said over and over that would get through this, that we would get through this together, and we have: We got through it together.

Last night, the Class of 2021 concluded their days at Lewiston-Porter by walking across the stage at Artpark, receiving their diplomas, moving their tassels, throwing their caps into the air. Danielle Mullen and I were honored to be on that stage to celebrate their graduation. In any given (normal) school year, commencement is the highlight of our year, as we are given the opportunity to share in the accomplishments and the joy of our graduates and their families. This year was especially significant, moving and emotional. As a parent, with three graduations behind her (and one to go), I understand exactly how bittersweet commencement is: The years between those first steps to the bus in kindergarten and the walk across the stage at Artpark go by so very, very quickly. Add two school years interrupted and reimagined by a global pandemic into the mix, and it was with exceptional joy that we

We wish each graduate great success and much happiness. We would also like to recognize the incredible academic achievement of this class. In a first for a graduating class, the top three students of the Class of 2021 will attend Ivy League universities this Fall: Valedictorian Justin Currie will attend Brown University; Valedictorian Justin Pavan will attend Dartmouth College; and Jessie Avila-Shah will attend Yale University. We are incredibly proud of their achievement and wish them, and each of their fellow graduates, the very best. Congratulations, Class of 2021!

The Board of Education also concluded 2020-21 this week, with the last meeting of year on Monday. Highlights of our meeting:

- Tina Rodriguez, IEC Principal, was granted tenure as an administrator - a significant and well-deserved achievement in her professional career. Tina was an elementary teacher at Lewiston-Porter for seventeen years before becoming an administrator. She served as Assistant Principal of the Middle School, becoming IEC Principal in 2017. She is an excellent administrator and it is our privilege to approve her recommendation for tenure. Congratulations, Tina!
- Dr. Barbara Godshall and Sue Baer were recognized as winners of this year's Excellence in Service Awards by the Western New York Educational Service Council. The award recognizes and celebrates their personal qualities, professional achievement, and exemplary contributions to the students they serve. A well-deserved honor, made all the more significant as Dr. Godshall is retiring. Congratulations, Barb and Sue!
- We were joined by the IEC for a presentation on "Celebrating our Differences, Inclusion and Diversity". The students, led by Joy Khatib, Katie Danahy, and Leah Khatib, shared their work on a project to create awareness and understanding in support of students with disabilities. The goal of the project was to support Down Syndrome Awareness Month and was an informative and heartwarming presentation on being inclusive and kind. Thank you to for sharing your work with the Board of Education.

- We recognized and bid a fond farewell to our many retirees as they end their careers at Lewiston-Porter and begin the next phase of their lives. We wish each much happiness in retirement.

This was an extremely difficult year, with many extraordinary challenges. The commitment of this Board to doing the very best for our students, families, faculty, staff and community cannot be overstated. Navigating a pandemic required a very high level of governance capability, professionalism, empathy and strength. Working together with the Superintendent and administration, the Board of Education did everything possible to educate, inspire, support and keep safe our entire school community. I want to personally recognize and thank our board for their dedication, integrity, and strength.

While we celebrate that we have made it through, as we celebrate the strength and resilience it took, we must also recognize the toll, the losses we have suffered, both individually and collectively, and that none of us emerge through this pandemic the same. We were each provided an enormous amount of time and opportunity to reflect on our lives, on what means the most to us and what we want to do with the time given us. May this hard-earned clarity guide each of our lives going forward, post-pandemic.

Our meeting on Monday concluded both the 2020-21 school year and my tenure on the Board of Education. I am stepping down at this time in order to pursue a professional opportunity within the district. In my eleven years in service to the Lewiston-Porter community, I have always strived to be transparent and forthright, to take the high road, and I strive to do so now. I am very proud of the work I have done on the Board of Education and the leadership I have been able to provide the district. The best interest of Lewiston-Porter has and always will be my priority, and I am confident that I leave the board in very capable and caring hands. Thank you for allowing me to keep you in the loop these past many years. Stay strong, stay safe and have a wonderful summer!