To My Fellow Educators,

What an exciting time to welcome you to the 2022-2023 school year! Whether you are a first-year teacher or a veteran with many years’ experience, the year ahead has many exciting opportunities that await! During the beginning of each year, my stomach flutters with butterflies just like it did when I was in elementary school and I often can’t sleep the night before the first day of school. The new team of educators that unite to become a family in our building is a powerful bank of knowledge with huge hearts. A blank slate awaits us as children walk into our buildings and classrooms for the first time in a few days. Educators have such an important job of molding and shaping the lives of these early learners and young adults.

While it seems like just yesterday that I started my teaching career, there are numerous experiences I have been blessed with that have molded me into the educator I am today. From the start of my career, to having my own children and watching them grow through their educational journey, to leading our school from “Academic Watch” to a “Level A” accountability rating, each step along the way has shown me one thing that we all need – a CHAMPION. Not only do our students need a CHAMPION, but educators need CHAMPIONS as well! We need to be surrounded by those who will encourage us, inspire us, keep us going when times are challenging, and celebrate our failures and successes with us. In turn, we need to be that for others.

At NWRE we start the day with our entire school community saying our Cougar Chant together as they watch the morning newscast. The words are, “Let me hear your Cougar PAWS... P = Personal Best, A = Accept and Respect, W = Wise Choices, S = Stay Safe... all together now... Live, Love, Learn, Leave A Legacy.” I believe these last four phrases remind us what is required for educational CHAMPIONS.

LIVE - by striving to be the best you can be. Educators have a passion and a purpose when coming to work each day. They share that passion and that purpose drives them to inspire greatness in others. Educators bring learning to life and open new worlds for young minds. When the world around us does not see the value in teaching, educators are resilient and take this challenge head on, continuing to reach every student, every day, whatever it takes. In the words of Ron Clark, “Be different. Be bold. Do not do things the same way. Instead of taking the stairs like everyone else, slide. Go for it and live with no fear.”

LOVE - by caring for others. Bob Goff reminds us that, “It will be our love, not our opinions which will be our greatest contributions to the world.” The love that educators have for their learners and for their colleagues goes beyond academics. This love encompasses the whole child and wants the best for each learner in all phases of life. The school building has the potential to be one large family where all members support and care for those around them. Flight attendants remind us that we must put our own masks on first and then care for others. Educators must remember the value of self-care in order to have the endurance to maintain a successful career.

LEARN - by working hard in school and always doing your best. Teachers are lifelong learners who not only embrace the changes that the 21st century brings, but also remember the impact we have of shaping the child’s view of themselves and the world around them. We must always remember the words of Jimmy Casas, “We are blessed everyday with the opportunity to change the course of someone’s life with our words, our actions, and our belief in their abilities. By changing our perspectives, we can change lives.” We must work to constantly build the capacity of educators so they can continually sharpen the minds of those around them. It is vital that we recognize and celebrate fellow educators as they continue their learning journey. Educators are the best models for growth mindset and collaboration, joining together to expand our knowledge and bring that learning back to our students.

LEAVE A LEGACY - by sharing our school with others and trying to make a difference in the world. Rita Pearson reminded us that, “Every student needs a champion, an adult who will never give up on them, who understands the power of connections and insists they become the best they possibly be.” This is what educators do each and every day. They are perpetual cheerleaders, parental figure heads, caretakers, nurturers, milk openers and counselors. We must continue to share the importance of this amazing role as educators, recruiting others to join in the call. It is a privilege and an amazing responsibility!

To my fellow educator – never forget that you are strong, innovative, valuable, talented, inspiring, creative, unique, and priceless! Rally around your students and fellow colleagues to be the CHAMPION that they need and deserve. Parents – support, respect, and value your educators for they are the key to unlocking your child’s greatest potential! Students – thank your teacher for the experiences he/she brings to the classroom each day. The field of education is a beautiful place to partner with others and make a powerful difference in the world around us.

Living, Loving, Learning, and Leaving a Legacy,

Kara Killough
2022 MS Administrator of the Year