

June 16, 2020

To the School Board Members of the WRED,

I am writing this letter to share my perspective on the long-term planning for the future of our district's educational opportunities and structures. As a taxpayer, a parent of two young children, an educator and an administrator in our district, my view of this challenging task takes on many lenses. I understand how difficult and important this decision making process is, and I appreciate the time and energy all of the board members put forth to support our schools and children.

During the June 8, 2020 board meeting the notion of keeping all of the school reconfiguration options on the table was raised, after it had been mentioned that a few were going to be taken off of the table. Then, the notion of creating a survey for the community was raised, asking townspeople to make a choice- if they had to- which would they close, the elementary schools or the high school, and that this survey could potentially then be used to help guide the school board towards their next step of action. I strongly disagree with both of these notions.

In my professional and personal opinion, I believe it would best serve our children and our communities if we eliminate any options that include closing Leland and Gray Middle and High School. When we discuss restructuring and consolidating buildings, it is one thing to discuss keeping all of our young elementary aged children in our district through combining buildings, and an entirely different thing to discuss sending our middle and high school aged children out of our buildings and towns completely.

As a parent and educator I believe the benefits of a smaller middle and high school greatly outweigh the benefits of a larger school system. As a parent and educator I believe it is best for my children to attend schools that are located in the communities in which they live, that they move up into higher grades with peers that they have known since pre-school or earlier, that they experience the joys and struggles of what life brings surrounded by familiar faces that they have grown to know over the course of their elementary years.

The longer the board keeps the options that do not support keeping a middle and high school in our district, the more likely it is to continue to drive away quality educators, families seeking a high quality secondary educational experience, and prospective families who are seeking refuge from metropolitan areas during this time of living with COVID-19.

The longer we continue to question the future of any of our buildings, the more likely it is that we will continue to watch enthusiastic and passionate teachers leave our district. This spring, we at Leland and Gray hired 14 new staff members. We have welcomed excellent teachers into our building, coached them, mentored them and helped them develop into even better teachers. We then watch them leave as they begin to hear about the unknown future of their employment and support for the school. This cycle is not a sustainable method for building a consistent, high quality staff for our children and families. There is certainly no lack of motivation or drive to continually work on improving Leland and Gray for our students, the staff who have stayed year after year are those who see, feel and understand how important our school is for all of our students. When new teachers join our teaching community, they get swept up in Rebel Nation pride and can feel the authentic and genuine ways that our staff positively impacts each and

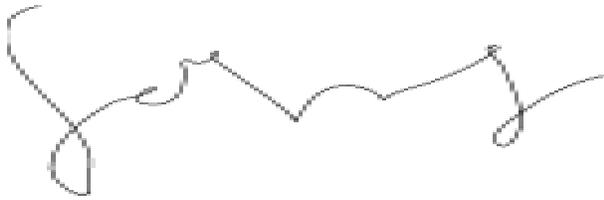
every single student in the school. These new teachers do not necessarily want to leave, but often don't feel like they have a choice in a system where the potential of their building closing is raised year after year.

The longer we keep these options on the table, the longer we bring forth more stress for our families that are already in extremely high stress situations. We have more and more families who are food and shelter insecure. Families that have lost jobs, lost housing and have lost their means for getting their basic needs met. These families have relied on the L&G school community for food, clothing and housing assistance. As we continue to talk about potentially shutting down the largest hub in our communities, this is much added stress to these already very stressed families.

As an administrator at Leland and Gray, I believe this is a prime opportunity for our community to come together to show support for our middle and high school aged children. Coming off of the most challenging, exciting and strange school year in history, we at Leland and Gray are carrying forth with us the passion, drive, motivation and care that we have for each and every one of our students in mind. We have spent hours discussing the positive outcomes of the distance learning experience, we are beginning to design and plan for all of the ways we can continue to personalize our students' educational paths, increase our academic rigor and build on the variety of opportunities we will be able to provide for them.

Again, I truly appreciate all of your time as school board members and feel confident knowing that we share many of the same values and beliefs around education and our communities. I thank you for your time and consideration of this request to remove all options that include the closing of Leland and Gray Union Middle and High School as we move forward with long-term planning for our district.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Johanna Liskowsky-Doak'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial 'J' and a long, sweeping underline.

Johanna Liskowsky-Doak