

I am deeply honored to have this chance to introduce myself to the Davis school community! For fifteen years, I have hoped to become a principal within our vibrant, diverse city, and I am grateful today for the chance to join and work alongside a school community that has partnered for so long to maintain Davis School at such a high level. I promise to earn your faith and trust, each day, in small and large ways, as we collaborate to sustain and build an even more responsive, high-performing, and caring school.

I am further humbled and honored to take over for such a legendary and successful school leader. Mr. Harrell's impact on New Rochelle has been immeasurable; his devotion and work forms the foundation of Davis School. I am reminded daily of his love for the teachers and decades-full of children with whom he worked. Continuing his legacy of dedication to Davis is a challenging but critical priority for me.

My history in New Rochelle is much shorter than Mr. Harrell's, spanning only the last fifteen years. I taught third and fourth grade at Columbus Elementary for five years and served as the Chairman of the Mathematics and Technology Departments at Isaac E. Young Middle School for nine years. This past school year, I was fortunate to have had the opportunity to return to Columbus as Assistant Principal at a time of great transition.

This is an exciting time to be a teacher and a principal. It is a particularly challenging time, too. Our nation and our district are in the beginning years of a great reinvention. We have adopted rigorous national standards that must be understood, unpacked, and sequenced into sensible, well-balanced curricula and instructional units. Even local testing has now become "high-stakes" testing, and teachers and principals are now judged yearly against standards designed to isolate student growth.

In light of all the mandates and historic reforms that have formed a new landscape of education at present, effective leaders must fight to secure consistent and productive bonds within and beyond our schools. I realize that Davis teachers—for many years—have carefully developed teaching models and practices that have produced exemplary student results that have stood out state-wide! I pledge to lead and collaborate with all of you to maintain the school's critical focus on high-achievement, communication, and fostering an environment of kindness and caring.

Looking ahead, I am excited by the work we must commit to as we pull apart our national standards and weave the progressions of math and literacy learning within into well-sequenced units of study that bind a year's worth of learning, and connect intelligently grade to grade. These are challenging but exciting times, and I can't wait to start working with Davis' talented core of teachers as we strive to effectively incorporate the skills necessary for the new assessments and new standards into the routines of purposeful, child-centered, creative instruction.

Two objectives stand out for me, still, as we move within a new and evolving landscape. First, while so much in education has turned to measurement of the individual—student by student growth, calculating the value added of *individual* teachers year to year—what will sustain Davis Elementary in the years that come must be a focus on a collective vision and a commitment to pool our mutual wisdom, class by class, family by family, grade by grade. Cohesive teams produce sustained progress. Second, even as we acknowledge the importance of well-designed assessments and standards, far more critical must be a shared obligation to our more profound principles as educators and parents—that we are here to nurture our children's minds and spirits.

I promise to work with all of you to ensure that Davis Elementary School continues to stand out in our community as a landmark of rigorous and responsive teaching and learning. Toward this end, please know that I will remain forever open to hearing your insights, critiques and concerns. Please know as well that you are always welcome to meet with me, email me, call me, or just stop by to chat.

Gratefully,

Michael Galland