A Joint Message from Jeff Bell and Patty Abrams, Board Chair

Dear Beacon Community,

With competing emotions in my heart, I am writing to share the news that 2019-2020 will be my last school year at Beacon Academy. I have accepted the position of Head of School at Cardinal Gibbons High School in Raleigh, North Carolina, and this summer our family will be relocating to our new home in the Research Triangle. It has been a tremendous honor to serve this school these past seven years, and it was one of the great joys of my life to work with the founding Board of Directors to enact their bold vision to reimagine high school education.

We, all of us, built Beacon Academy together. Our teachers and staff, our entrepreneurial students and their families, and our dedicated Board members all had a role -- not just in creating Beacon Academy, but also in turning Beacon Academy into a thriving and stable Montessori high school. I have complete confidence that our administrators are well-positioned to carry our school through this time of transition, and they are surrounded by a staff of teachers who have no shortage of innovative ideas for the coming years. I look ahead with nothing but excitement for this new chapter in Beacon Academy’s story.

It has been a privilege to work with Patty Abrams, our Board Chair, the founding families who believed in Beacon Academy when it was only an idea, and the many supporters and benefactors of our school over these years. You are the ones who envisioned and ensured a bright future for Beacon Academy. And for the months ahead, our Board of Trustees brings a diverse set of skills and expertise in leading organizations through times of change. They will foster a smooth, successful leadership transition which is highlighted in further detail in the letter below.

My family has been welcomed, encouraged, and embraced by this school community from the moment we arrived in 2013, and we will be forever grateful for the impact you have had on us. While there is much sadness in leaving a place we love so much, we also know that to have experienced overwhelming kindness and support from such a remarkable school is a blessing that very few are privileged to experience. Beacon Academy will continue to be part of our lives, and we look forward to celebrating the many future successes of this school in the coming years. Next semester, I look forward to thanking all of you personally for everything you have done to make Beacon Academy the extraordinary school that it is.

I will be available on Friday if students would like to come in and talk with me to get a better understanding of our next steps together as a school.

With profound gratitude,

Jeff Bell
A note from Patty Abrams, Board of Trustees

Dear Beacon Families,

With gratitude for the leadership he has brought to our community, I write to inform you that this school year will be Jeff Bell’s last with Beacon Academy. Next year, he will begin as Head of School at Cardinal Gibbons High School in Raleigh, North Carolina.

Jeff was hired as the founding head to help realize the vision Beacon’s Founding Trustees laid out eight years ago when they imagined a Montessori high school that brought a unique approach to the educational landscape of Chicago. During his tenure, he adeptly broadcasted the mission of this start-up and attracted the school’s founding families. He established a culture of compassion and commitment. Moreover, Jeff hired a phenomenal, entrepreneurially-minded faculty who embody the school’s mission and guide our young adults as they “master the skills, knowledge, and habits of mind necessary to meaningfully contribute to a complex and diverse world with compassion and confidence.” Together, our faculty, staff, students, families and board have laid a foundation that solidly positions us to move from start-up to sustainability.

We are sorry to see Jeff move on, but we are grateful for the seven years he spent with us. I know the Cardinal Gibbons community will benefit from his bold initiatives and commitment to guiding young adults through the crucial years in a student’s development. On a personal level, I am grateful to have had the opportunity to work with Jeff. I wish Jeff, Kim, and their children the very best during this exciting time.

We have always billed ours as an innovative school, and innovation means defining change as opportunity. With that in mind, the Board has begun the process of finding the school’s next leader. Beacon has created a buzz in the world of education, and we anticipate attracting a host of talented and inspiring candidates. There will be many opportunities for our community to offer insights and feedback. Please know that we are committed to a transparent and inclusive process that taps into the insights of all our stakeholders.

We will provide regular updates in the coming months. In the meantime, if you would like to talk with me directly, I can be reached at boardchair@beaconacademychicago.org.

Gratefully,

Patty Abrams
President, Beacon Board of Trustees