

December, 2011

Dear Families and Supporters of North Muskegon Public Schools:

I have had the privilege of serving you as elementary school principal since August of 2004. We were in the middle of a major renovation of our campus at that time and it has been a non stop march forward for our district since then. I began my career during a very warm August, 1974, in Ionia, MI teaching English for grades 5 through 8 with a 7th grade homeroom. Ionia is a farming community and had three prisons located nearby. That made for a very interesting mix of people. During that first year I had 32 students who were the greatest kids a teacher would want. They were very understanding as this young 22 year old began a love affair with teaching and learning.

I completed by bachelor's degree at Grand Valley State College of Arts and Sciences. It wasn't a big university back then since we had nearly 7,000 students. So it was quite a shock to begin work on my Master's Degree in Educational Administration at Michigan State University with nearly 40,000 students while continuing to teach in Ionia. It wasn't a long drive and I enjoyed the ride with friends. Summers I could take more classes and hang out with my younger brother who was also attending MSU. Eventually I finished up my work and began leading a fairly large K-8 school in the core area of Grand Rapids northeast side of town.

To make a long story short, I ended my time with the Diocesan School System after 30 years and began to search for a public school gig. I moved to the Grand Haven area and enjoy living in a year round cottage that I renovated with help from family and friends. I hoped to find a job near the lakeshore. After several near misses for potential leadership positions up and down US31 I received a call from Mr. Weaver who was promoted to superintendent here at NM and needed to fill his old job. I interviewed twice and was finally offered the job. At the board meeting he called me a "turn key" candidate. Later I asked what he meant by that he said, "It is kind of like a transitional pope; someone who can take over without the need for a lot of explanation. You know, experience." I was very impressed with the interview committee and felt it would be a good fit. Although I hoped to give a full 10 years I have to say the size of the job every year has increased. Unfortunately, my stamina has not been able to keep up with the time and energy required. So I requested and was granted a personal leave of absence that will begin shortly after the Christmas break and officially retiring in May.

I have enjoyed the children more than anything else here. They are full of life, are very smart and have a great sense of humor. The support from our parents is overwhelming (especially the PTA) and this support and involvement help make us a great school. The teachers are dedicated and don't give up until they find success in their students. I have enjoyed working with so many of them and the great natured support staff here. Our para-professionals, maintenance staff, clerical and fellow administrators have provided support and concern for each other every year. Curt Babcock, Heidi Christiansen and Steve Sanocki are young, smart and have the energy to carry the district forward and make sure it continues to be the successful effort that we all know and enjoy. I want to thank them and you for making this an enriching and interesting experience.

After I retire in May, I will enjoy serving on The Dean's Alumni Advisory Committee at GVSU, giving time to the new school the Diocese supported and built while I was principal in Holland at Corpus Christi, spending quality time with family and friends, and enjoy quiet walks at Hoffma Nature Preserve with my yellow lab Boomer and the other labs (and one Rottweiler) we walk with there. I enjoy many sports and hobbies: fishing, golf, downhill skiing, and home improvement, to name a few. So I will have plenty to do and keep me out of trouble.

God bless you all for your support and friendship, have a Merry Christmas, Happy Hanukah and enjoy a successful New Year.

Peace and Joy to All of You
Mitri (Mr.Z) Zainea