JACKSON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

National Blue Ribbon School
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So long. Farewell. Thanks for the memories.

I want to take this opportunity to say to my esteem SCS colleagues so long and farewell. I have had a great career inspiring teachers, staff members, educating scholars and their families over the course of thirty years at Kingsbury, Gardenview and Jackson Elementary. The landscape of "Education" is certainly challenging and ever changing; yet, doable given the right climate, resources, and talents.

Many of you may not be aware, but I come from a dynasty of robust educators. I am a proud third generation educator. My paternal grandmother was an elementary school principal and my maternal grandmother taught in grades K-12 for 43 years in Mississippi. My father taught history whereas my mother, Marian Swauncy-Mozell, taught elementary education in Arkansas for thirty years until her health declined. During family gatherings, I heard conversations as a child centered around the dinner table regarding "How to best help children." So then, I was innately, destined to do this work.

I am truly blessed to have worked my last two years under the dynamic, awesome leadership of Dr. Thomas Rogers, in zone 9. I have garnered so much as a leader from him and have the utmost respect for him. When I did not think I had any strength left to learn something new to my repertoire or perform a task that would foster growth and sustainability for Jackson Elementary, somehow Dr. Rogers managed to pull it out of me. Trust me, there are "No illusions" when it comes to working with him. He is simply bar none!

As I reflect over my 17 years at Jackson Elementary with a high poverty ELL population, I am most proud that we have maintained a TVAAS Level 5 since 2005. In 2006, our school was recognized by then Governor Bredesen as a Highly Effective Value-Added School. There were only 3 schools from Memphis (Oakshire, Jackson, and Raineshaven) that earned this first distinction. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan recognized Jackson Elementary as a 2012 TN Reward School. In 2016, there were 10 schools recognized in the entire state of Tennessee by the Education Index Council of Great City, Great Schools. Happily to say, Jackson Elementary was one of the 10. Furthermore in 2016, Jackson Elementary earned the distinction as a 2016 National Blue Ribbon School for Exemplary Performance in Closing the Achievement Gap. While the stakes were higher with a more rigorous curriculum and new TN Ready test, we managed to maintain a TVAAS Level 5 for the 2016-17 school year given limited resources.

I have some fond memories of working in this district. I have had some great times coupled with a few tears along the way. I have tried my best to serve the Jackson community affectionately called "Little Mexico" with the help of great talented individuals from the cafeteria, custodian, secretarial, assistants and teachers. I can vividly remember Dr. Carol Johnson, former MCS Superintendent, teaching us about the 4 R's: Relationships, Responsibilities, Respect and Results. Often, my staff will hear me say, "There is no 'I' in teamwork."

So I say to you my colleagues in the words of Superintendent Hopson, Finish Strong! Hold on and continue to persevere even when you do not feel like it. Galvanize your staffs and share what you know to help children.

Let me close by sharing one of my favorite poems.
*One hundred years from now it won't matter **What** kind of car I drove, **What** kind of house I lived in. **How** much money I had in the bank **Nor** what my clothes look like **But** the world may be a little better **Because**, I was important in the life of a child.*
Therefore, one day you can **CHOOSE** to say at your thirty-year milestone, So long, Farewell!

God's speed to each of you!

Yolanda

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