

John W. Barile, Superintendent

Convocation - August 27, 2015

Opening Address to the Brookfield Public Schools Faculty & Staff

As I look out on the audience today, I think about the influence that each of us has as we come together to open the 2015-2016 school year. Since June I have been looking forward to and thinking about addressing this very special group of teachers, leaders, and critical support staff of the BPS.

Our influence as members of the BPS family has an enormous impact on the children and community we serve. With this influence comes great power and more importantly even greater responsibility. Together we have an awesome opportunity to impact the future by influencing the direction of students' lives, which in turn will shape not only the community of Brookfield but society at large. When I talk about influence, I am referring to your total sphere of influence.

Over the past several weeks I had developed a 14 slide power point presentation filled with goals, grand plans, and motivational quotes from prominent people which was to be my opening message to you. Since I first developed it, I have been playing with it, reflecting on it, and running it by trusted colleagues. As a result of this experience, and coupled with my many recent interactions with many of you and other members of the community, and after a beautiful conversation with one of my sons, it became clear what I needed to say to you this morning. and it wasn't contained in that power point.

My youngest son Jason is headed to middle school this year. He had his grade 6 orientation this past Monday night. As we were walking into the big school together, we talked about our experiences this summer; fishing, and playing ball, wrestling, visiting Grammy, and going to the beach. He then said to me, "Dad, we are kind of the same this year. I am starting at a new school and you have your new job in Brookfield." Acknowledging his comments, I told him, "that's right, in our new places we both have to focus, work hard, and be kind, just like we always do." He looked up at me and said, "Dad, do you ever get nervous when starting something new or when school starts?"

In my response to him I was mindful of the similarities of my role as an educator and as Jason's dad. I must admit to him, like anyone else, there are times when I have had a feeling of butterflies in my stomach but as you get older and have more experiences we become better at handling new situations and dealing with the natural emotions that go along with them. We had a one of those great father-son moments that you just can't plan for.

My interaction with Jason got me thinking even more about the power all of us in this room have. All of us can connect to that butterfly feeling. It's part of being human. My anticipation is not because I have to stand in front of 350 staff members, who are waiting to see what the new guy has to say... this new guy who made me sign in and made me wear a button. My sense of butterflies are fueled by my overwhelming respect for the potential that each new school year offers.

As your superintendent I am humbled by what I see here in Brookfield. I have met wonderful children this summer filled with promise, parents full of hope for their children and for the success of our enterprise, administrators a bit anxious about the upcoming year but ever ready to keep grinding, moving forward, and exercising vision and leadership. Teachers, volunteering on interview committees, taking graduate classes-getting better at their craft. The support team including secretaries, custodians, maintenance staff- present every day this summer to ensure we all have what we need and are ready to open for the kids on Monday. Elected officials, volunteering their time to ensure that we have the resources the students need.

It's power- I am humbled by the power we have to impact children's lives.

Influence - The students want to do what's right

The power to influence the students

- love of learning
- humanity
- creativity and innovation
- belief in themselves & self worth

- how they interact with others
- ethos of service and giving
- loyalty
- And that failing or making a mistake does not mean that one is a failure. But that failure and mistakes are ok, they are ultimately what contributes to success!

Over the summer I met with the principals and administrative team, many citizens and many of you sitting in this room. I have seen great things to be thankful for in Brookfield...Concrete keys to our future success

- We have the technology in place and the ability to harness its potential for learning
- Abundance professional learning opportunities
- All I ever hear is We Have Great kids- high graduation rate-our students attend competitive colleges
- Our students achieve academically-athletically- in the visual & performing arts
- Strong parent support
- The town has generously provided significant funding for upgrading our facilities
- The desire of the people in this room to lead, be lead, and contribute
- The potential for greatness in all facets of the organization
- Dedicated faculty, staff and administration

Folks, we have all of the foundational assets for greatness. We are positioned to ascend on an amazing trajectory. It's time to come together and capitalize on our strengths and become a cohesive model of excellence in education.

Being an educator is an awesome responsibility. To be able to influence the lives and futures of children is a gift to be respected, and never taken for granted. As educators we are privileged to be in a position to lead children, parents, community members, and ourselves as we collaborate towards greatness.

Thank you.