



August 2017

Dear Families,

I am writing to you with the news that this coming year will be my last at The Common School. After six wonderful years, I have decided to resign as Head of School. The Common School is truly an extraordinary place, with a dedicated faculty and staff, families who give tirelessly of themselves, and an unparalleled cohort of children who bring joy to the school on a daily basis. When I first visited the school seven years ago, I felt deeply compelled, both by the vibrant sense of community, as well as the commitment to progressive education that I noticed everywhere. This is even more true today, and is a testament to the school's long history as an educational leader in the Pioneer Valley. It really has been an honor to serve as the head of such an amazing community.

In looking back, I see that we have accomplished so much in the past six years! Most visible is our work in being a more diverse and inclusive community. We developed a diversity statement, created guidelines for hiring staff of color, hosted diversity forums, and have grown our enrollment to 28% students of color. Our extraordinary teachers have invested significant time and focus in reviewing curriculum and exploring new ideas about teaching. Their accomplishments include the development of emergent curriculum in the nurseries, rethinking existing studies on Native Americans and Africa, and adding brand new studies to the program – including a history of the Pioneer Valley in E1 and Wednesdays in the Woods in P1, as well as embedding more social justice into our daily work. Our learning support program, in particular, has strengthened to include focused check-ins on student progress in reading, expanding learning support staff to provide small breakout groups in classrooms, and the creation of the Learning Support Coordinator position. We now have a co-teacher model in the elementary classrooms, addressing both learning needs in our multi-age groups, as well as equity amongst teaching staff. We addressed technology needs, adding laptops to the E2 classroom, bringing cable service to the school to improve connectivity speed, and updating our website. Seven teachers have been able to take on expanded summer study or travel to support their professional growth through donor-sponsored funding, opportunities that bring rejuvenation and new ideas to both individuals and the school. We are in the midst of a capital building project aimed at essential renewal of our physical plant. And amazingly, we have raised over \$1million in support of this new building project. This renewal will allow the school to continue to expand programs in the coming years. When I think back, I see how much The Common School has grown. We really have so much to celebrate.

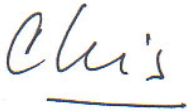
But now, as the school readies itself for its next strategic planning phase, the time is right for me to pass on the privilege of leading this awe-inspiring school to the next person. The coming year – the 50th anniversary of the founding of the school – will be a time for celebration, but also for reflection. As we think together on the future of the common school, we have the opportunity to imagine a leader who will usher us into the next 50 years. The school is in a very strong place to

attract a highly qualified and dynamic Head of School. We have been an exemplar of child-centered, progressive education for the past 50 years, and are well known in the education world. The board will put together a strong team to find a new Head who will embrace the school with love and care, and carry the school forward in its next stage of growth.

I am also looking forward to my own next adventure. I have the chance to broaden my experiences through educational consulting and supporting humanitarian efforts. This is an amazing opportunity for me. I will, of course, continue to be very present in the community this coming year, from greeting families on the path each morning, to working closely with faculty, staff, and the board in ensuring a smooth transition of leadership, and guiding the school in another year of vibrant learning.

It has been my greatest pleasure to be part of The Common School community. To have worked alongside my inspiring colleagues, who embody all that The Common School stands for, has been a real honor. My deepest thanks to the many wonderful families who have given so much of themselves in support of the school. I applaud our hard-working trustees, whose vision and care will carry The Common School into its next 50 years. And to the children, who inspire us all.

With much appreciation,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Christine". The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined with a single horizontal line.

Christine Lindeman
Head of School