



November 15, 2019

Dear Loyal Heights Elementary Community,

As you are aware, Principal Geri Guerrero has been out on leave and will be out for the remainder of the 2019-2020 school year and will not be returning to Loyal Heights Elementary. Thank you for your patience during the past month, we know that uncertainty can be difficult. Mr. Michael Berkenwald has been appointed as the acting principal of Loyal Heights Elementary for the remainder of the school year. Mr. Berkenwald will be joining LHE from John Hay Elementary, where he has served as the assistant principal since 2015.

Feedback from LHE staff and community indicated the desire for a leader who listens to their voices and perspectives; a leader who cares, is hardworking and transparent, and one who will be visible. In addition, parents and staff also expressed the need for a leader who is approachable, a strong communicator, and an advocate with exceptional leadership skills; a leader who will work to bring the school community together. Mr. Berkenwald embodies these characteristics, and his extensive school leadership experience make him a great fit for the LHE community.

At John Hay, Mr. Berkenwald has focused on developing a robust Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) to provide students with individualized needs. Mr. Berkenwald also formulated and implemented a preventative discipline system that incorporated positive behavior interventions and supports, social emotional learning, and restorative practices. His leadership capability, job knowledge, and friendly disposition should instill confidence in the Loyal Heights community that each student will be cared for in elementary school and beyond.

Mr. Berkenwald has also served on the Seattle Public Schools Assistant Principal Professional Development Planning Team and participated in the Aspiring Principal Academy program for future building leaders. Prior to becoming an administrator, Mr. Berkenwald taught social studies at Garfield High School for eight years and served on multiple district curriculum development teams. Before joining SPS, Mr. Berkenwald taught English in both Japan and Israel.

Principal Berkenwald earned his Bachelor of Arts in history from the University of Washington; his Master's in Teaching from Seattle Pacific University; and his Principal Certification and Master's in Educational Leadership from the University of Washington's Danforth Educational Leadership Program.

In the spring, SPS central office will determine if a principal selection process is needed and will inform the LHE community of any next steps and logistics regarding this process. Until then, Principal Berkenwald's dedication to collaborative problem solving and his commitment to high quality learning for all students, combined with his transformational leadership experience, will be a great fit for Loyal Heights. His official start date will be November 18, 2019. A special thanks also goes out to Liz Sanchez for her leadership during this time of transition. Liz will be working closely with Michael to continue to support students, staff, and the community.

Please join me in welcoming acting principal Michael Berkenwald to Loyal Heights Elementary School.

Sincerely,
Denise Juneau
Superintendent