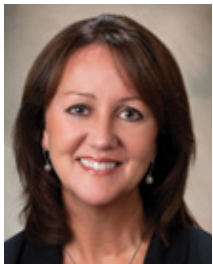




Passion, Purpose PROMISE



A retiring school administrator reflects on her career in public education

Pat Greco

I am retiring at the end of this year as superintendent for the School District of Menomonee

Falls. I've considered my age to be just a number, until "that number" reached closer to retirement age. Now, I have the gift of reflecting on my career and our profession. I can also look ahead and think about the promise and potential of our field.

As I leave the School District of Menomonee Falls, I couldn't be more thrilled for our students, team

and the Village of Menomonee Falls. Our board is strong, skilled and centered. Our new superintendent, Corey Golla, is principled, driven and focused on the continued growth of students, staff and leaders. The Menomonee Falls team is pushing the edges of improvement for our students and our field. I love being an educator and hold remarkable hope for our profession.

■ My Start in Education

I remember driving to Kewaskum Middle School in my 1977 orange

Ford Pinto. Excited to start teaching at the middle school as a special education teacher, I had 16 boys in my first class who struggled with behavior and learning to read. A few had already been grade retained multiple times. My year-long contract was \$6,800 — a teacher contract hadn't been settled for the previous three years.

I also agreed to be the assistant coach for boy's track. My coaching role was tied to my teaching contract. The middle school had metal siding that was rusting. My classroom was

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shared with the custodian's storage area with brown paneling dividing the space. Supplies and materials were limited. New teacher development was a key to the school and my classroom.

That first year, I never felt more hope and more anxiety. My excitement turned to tears a few times that first month of school. Like now, the relationships with my colleagues pulled me through that first year. I've lost touch with many of my first colleagues, but I still appreciate the commitment of the experienced teachers who reached out to my younger self. I remember thinking in those early days, I too would be there to support new teachers in their future.

■ Changing Field

Our field, like all fields, has changed dramatically in 36 years. We know more now about how students learn, how to develop strong teachers and how to lead improving organizations. Technology has shifted how we think, teach, work and lead. Access to technology, information and continued development has fundamentally changed the expectations of what is possible for students, teachers and leaders.

Education is no longer locked within a building or dependent upon one individual teacher. Content is accessible from anywhere at any time. Student outcomes continue to be stronger than they have ever been for a broader range of our students.

Our expectations for success have also changed. The expectations for each child to be successful continues to outpace the rate of our improvement. We can access more, do more, and expect more. So, like many fields, education and educators have changed with the impact and speed of technology, knowledge of how people continue to learn, and the skills of how organizations improve.

Our passion for children and the promise of an education has remained unchanged. I marvel every day at educators who give their whole heart and skillset to the development of every child. Public education was designed to ensure our society is educated and access to success was not limited to elite white males.





■ Work to Do

Sadly, the promise of public education still faces significant disparities among our children. Access to opportunities, resources and development of our children and educators is divided sharply among districts.

We still sort and label schools and children based on attributes of wealth. We still pretend that success is somehow inherent within the communities with the greatest advantages. New teachers still enter our profession with differing levels of support to learn how to reach each child. Communities still view the promise of an education with a lens of haves and have nots. Some legislators still view education as a political chip to be played rather than the fundamental promise to healthy families, healthy communities and a healthy state. The tenants of Wisconsin Forward still hold as the promise for our state. The vision to get there is fractured.

■ Many Reasons for Hope

So why am I hopeful? I have seen some of the strongest educators, leaders and practices of student learning in my career.

School leaders and teachers, public and private, are digging in and owning their future, their skill development, and their accountability for improvement. Communities are committing to collective impact. The model for improvement is taking hold within education. We are learning deeply how to get better each day.

In the School District of Menomonee Falls and others around the country, the Nine Principles of Organizational Excellence are touching the daily work of staff members within school systems learning to behave as improving organizations. Barriers are coming down in communities committing to work together, vision the promise for each child and dig in with all their might. Real improvement for the full range of children is really happening.



■ Why Am I Retiring Now?

I have met thousands of individuals who are thinking deeply about how to make the real shift to improvement at scale for all teachers and schools. I want to commit my full energy in supporting this shift to improvement. The path to improve-

ment has never been clearer. My passion will follow that path joining those professionals who are all in.

My promise to help the next generation of teachers, leaders, boards and community leaders has come to life in a way I never envisioned. My father Ed Fagan would

say when you do good work, with good people, good things happen. Once again, my dad was right. ■

Pat Greco is retiring as superintendent of the School District of Menomonee Falls. She was named the 2018 Superintendent of the Year by the Wisconsin Association of School District Administrators.



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