

**Date:** September 18, 2023

**To:** LPSD School Board

**From:** Kacy Lou Leyba

**Regarding:** September Counseling Report

The first month of school has absolutely flown by! At the end of last school year, as I was reflecting on what went well in the counseling department and what could be improved upon, the concept of new teacher mentorship and staff support to increase retention continually came to mind. This year it is one of my goals to intentionally foster relationships with LPSD's new teaching staff, so we can in turn better support our students and communities together. As a part of this initiative, I had the privilege of joining Bill Cornell and Nicole Metzgar, among many other LPSD staff, at this year's new teacher induction in Anchorage back in August. That time spent helping train our new staff in everything from navigating Powerschool to reminding them of the importance of self-care has already proven fruitful, as these new teachers and I have been able to work together to support students who have been struggling academically and personally throughout the first month of school.

While September has brought many anticipated activities like classroom lessons, schedule set up, PSAT registration, junior/ senior graduation plan meetings, mental health check ins, and more, it has also brought some unexpected changes. Sadly on September 13th, Stephen Fink spent his last day as my LPSD co-counselor. He has since moved on to pursue other career options on the road system. (I am so grateful to have had the opportunity to work alongside and learn from Stephen over the past year. He will be greatly missed in LPSD.) Right as Stephen stepped away, Denali Smith (formerly Manning) of Spring Arbor University moved into our counseling department as this year's school counseling intern. Denali is a proud graduate of Meshik School and has already proven to be an incredibly valuable asset to LPSD. Additionally, Patty McCasland, who formerly taught at Newhalen, recently came on board with BBRCTE as the LPSD Career Development Specialist. Patty, Denali, and I have been able to strategize and set a solid foundation for how to best serve the students of LPSD this year through our various strengths and specialties. I'm choosing to see this unexpected transition as an opportunity for our school counseling program to enter into a season of strategic planning alongside our school board as they revisit our district's mission and vision.

Another small initiative of mine this year is to create a "Toolkit Thursday" email for all LPSD staff in order to help disseminate important scholarship information, BBRCTE deadlines, school counseling updates, and tips for trauma-informed education and social emotional learning in the classroom. I am excited to announce in this week's upcoming newsletter that LPSD had 25 students accepted into various BBRCTE programs for the October intensive, with 6 more selected as alternates.

I am looking forward to the rest of September now that we are all settled in the school year and the wave of transition seems to have passed. Please don't hesitate to reach out with any questions or suggestions. I am always all ears.

For the kids,  
Kacy Lou Leyba