



Dear School Leaders,

As we step into the 2024-2025 school year, I want to extend my warmest welcome and deepest gratitude for the work you do every day. This year, let's focus on what matters most: supporting high achievement, protecting each child's spirit, and nurturing the gifts and talents of our students and staff alike. Together, we have the power to inspire greatness in our school communities and make a lasting impact in the lives of those we serve.

At the start of every school year, I am reminded of Langston Hughes' powerful poem, *The Dream Keeper*. Hughes writes:

Bring me all of your dreams,
You dreamers,
Bring me all your
Heart melodies
That I may wrap them
In a blue cloud-cloth
Away from the too-rough fingers
Of the world.

In these lines, Hughes calls us to be the keepers of dreams—the guardians of the hopes and aspirations of our students. Each day, we have the privilege to nurture the dreams entrusted to us, to protect them from the "too-rough fingers of the world."

Let us carry these dreams with care and intention, creating spaces where every student feels safe to dream, grow and achieve. Together, we can build a future where these dreams are not only kept but also brought to life.



Over this last year and a half, we have enjoyed seeing all the great ways you are supporting your students dreams as we have visited your schools. We've appreciated your warm welcome and the chance to connect with each and every one of you.

Thank you for sharing this time with us to see the wonderful ways your schools help dreams become reality. Please check out [this map of the schools we have visited](#) and consider connecting with us in this way if you have not yet received a visit.

We will also continue to visit schools this year, aiming to reach every district, charter, and Tribal school in the state. I encourage you to connect with us by filling out this new [School Visit Survey](#) that will help plan our visits to schools we haven't yet visited. If your school or district has been visited by MDE leadership since early 2023, please do not fill out the survey.

We look forward to celebrating with you and addressing challenges together to support student success.



This week, MDE released the most recent assessment and accountability data. These moments are always fraught for me. I understand the importance of helping our students achieve high growth and academic excellence. This is our job, it's our goal for every child. And, while standardized test scores are valuable for measuring progress, they are just one piece of the puzzle. True success is also reflected in the resilience, creativity and critical thinking our students show daily.

This year, please join me in fostering learning environments that challenge each student to grow and achieve their full potential both academically and personally. By balancing our emphasis on test scores with an understanding of the whole child, we can cultivate well-rounded learners prepared to thrive in all aspects of life.

Have a great first start to the school year.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "A. Hill".

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Willie



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