



September 22, 2020

Dear Beacon City School District community stakeholders,

It is with great optimism that I am resigning my seat on the Beacon Board of Education in order to open an additional space for John Galloway Jr. and Jasmine Johnson, two well-qualified candidates of color, to both be appointed.

I make this decision with the best interests of Beacon schools at heart. I carry the hope that this will alleviate a difficult decision for the board and help our district heal from a history of lost trust in order to move forward with broader representation from the diverse communities within the City of Beacon.

It is a reality that the Covid19 crisis has exacerbated existing fissures of inequity, creating compound crises around racial justice, economic justice, and disability rights. I have deep admiration for our faculty on the front line as well as our administrators who I have witnessed laboring tirelessly to reinvent a new model of education.

During my time on the BoE, the Beacon School District has made bold steps to correct historical inequities that plague so many districts in our country. We spent countless hours modernizing our Code of Conduct, instituting restorative practices, and reviewing nearly every district policy through an equity framework. We have pioneered a robust program of equity training for our faculty. We are engaging in an overhaul of our curriculum and developing programs to elevate the cultural diversity in our student body. And we've maintained a culture of care, removing gender and racial bias from our dress code as well as strengthening the prohibition of hate speech and symbols of hate in our schools.

Though we celebrate these accomplishments, we recognize that there is still so much work to do, work that can not be completed without all communities owning seats at the table.

While we have made great progress in recent years, our most recently published assessment reveals that non-white students are five times as likely to be suspended, half as likely to be enrolled in honors or advanced courses, and 20% less likely to graduate compared to our students who identify as white. In this moment we must strongly acknowledge that the voices missing in our leadership are voices from the communities most affected by these inequities.

After meeting the candidates, it is obvious that we must take this opportunity to diversify the perspectives represented on the Board of Education. John and Jasmine are both excellent candidates, with roots in Beacon schools, and are deeply connected to different aspects of Beacon's diverse community.

It has been an honor to serve our district to help support our educators provide the greatest possible education for all our students. I believe at this moment the best way to lead is to step aside.

I want thank our school community, PTOs, the voters who elected me, the members of the Board of Education who have taught me so much in our time together, and I want to thank the young local leaders who have shown us all how to live with faith and optimism that we can come together to create the world we want to see.

With love and optimism,
James Case-Leal

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "James Case-Leal".