



Handley Educational Foundation; Board of Directors
RE: Handley Hills Capital Campaign

Dear Board Members,

I am pleased to be writing this letter of support for the “Handley Hills” project carried out in partnership with the City of Saginaw Public School District and the Saginaw Community Foundation. As the building leader of Handley Elementary, a Handley parent, and community member I enthusiastically support the goal and mission to “be playful, be inclusive, and have fun.” I am thankful to you for your advocacy and commitment to our community in leading this worthwhile endeavor.

Education, post-pandemic, has been so deeply challenging and will forever impact the way we prioritize, implement, and measure quality education. When we were in the midst of the pandemic, schools became hubs for community members to rely on for resources far outside of the academic realm. We provided wrap-around services that firmly prioritized physical health and emotional wellness over all other educational components. This shift paved the way for educators to fully understand and believe in the holistic approach to education— where the goal is to educate the whole child. We, schools specifically, have a greater responsibility to their communities than ever before.

Throughout this experience, our community partnerships, our emphasis on overall wellness, and ability to support students and families has strengthened beyond expectations. We are key stakeholders in identifying students and families who are struggling with homelessness, the implications of poverty, and the ramifications of trauma and toxic stress. School staff are instrumental in offering resources, supporting families, and ultimately providing nurturing, safe, and responsive environments for students to grow and learn. This has always been the goal of education, but after educating through a global pandemic and the aftermath, it looks and feels different.

The foundation of successful educational institutions is rooted in trust and a mutual understanding that we are all on the same team, laser focused on the best interest of our youth. We know now, more than ever, that kids **learn** better when they take the lead. We know now, more than ever, that students **understand** better when they investigate and inquire about the world around them. We know now, more than ever, that students **become** better when they have adults in their lives that they can trust to keep them safe and let them be who they are. That is exactly what happens on playgrounds like “Handley Hills,” where *all* children can be playful and have fun together. This play space will bring families together, bring the community closer, and make children feel like they really are the priority!

With appreciation,

Julie Miller

Mrs. Julie Miller, Handley Principal