

From: [Cohn, Gary](#)
To: [EPS.Maillist](#)
Subject: Happy Holidays!
Date: Friday, December 18, 2015 8:13:21 AM
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When I greeted you in September's "welcome back" message, I relied on some moving words offered by Anatole France; recall his thoughts on the power of "encouragement" as "nine tenths of education," and the power of "belief" to fuel our work. As I reflect on the scenes I've observed and the conversations I've heard in our schools, I can't help but notice the abundance of gratitude and real joy as well.

Encouragement and belief are everywhere, every day in our schools and workplaces – even though they may be, perhaps, more visible during the holiday season. This time of year, our students and staff donate tons of food, gather warm clothes, amass food and bedding for pets, and collect money and a creative array of different goods to help others. These acts are truly impressive; many in our communities depend upon our schools' seasonal generosity. Encouragement and belief as part of *The Everett Way* are made manifest to everyone this time of year. As I reflected on those thoughts during several visits to schools during this holiday season, I couldn't help but observe the remarkable effects of gratitude and joy in these powerful examples of collaboration among our students and their families.

I see and hear belief and encouragement in school offices when front line professionals interact calmly with a person on the other end of the phone line. I see it on sidelines as a coach puts a reassuring arm on a disappointed player's shoulder – or waves a high-five to another. Belief and encouragement are tangible in classroom interactions and as students are greeted in hallways or lunchrooms with open, no-nonsense fondness and familiarity.

I've felt that warm glow of gratitude and joy during concerts and performances this season. This was especially the case as I sat in Civic Auditorium for Gateway's holiday concert.

Now, one never knows what sounds might emanate from a musical instrument held by a child on any given night, especially during an "inaugural" concert. However, those violins in Gateway's burgeoning orchestra could not have been more beautiful or brought more joy than I felt that evening. Yes, I've held a personal and professional desire to see orchestra re-established in our schools. Those wonderful notes --and the belief and encouragement and joy they represent-- are just the start of even more music for more students and appreciative audiences in our district in the future. And yes, the picture in this email was taken with my phone while I sat and snapped pics like countless parents, family, and friends in the audience. I'm so grateful to all the wonderful staff and parents who are working to bring back strings to our performing arts offerings.

From boxes and bags and cans of food to beautiful voices to violins, together we are seeking and finding remarkable ways for each child to learn, to achieve at high standards, to pursue their creative passions, to find ways of expressing gratitude for the gifts that they recognize each day, and to contribute to our future in ways you and I cannot even imagine today.

As you prepare to join your family and friends for a joyful holiday season, I am taking this brief opportunity to express my gratitude to you for your belief in your students, your encouragement of and support for your colleagues, and for the joy you bring to families who entrust their children to our care. May this season bring you peace, rest, fun, laughter and even more reasons to believe in the goodness of what we do here each day. With warmest regards for your holidays,

Gary



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