

# **Interview with Principal Millington**

- Linda Fitzpatrick

High school is a time warp — sometimes unbearably slow, other times gone with the blink of an eye. It is hard to believe in three days, I'll be considered a Marblehead High School alum. I've found a simple harmony in my daily life walking the hallways of 2 Humphrey Street. It's hard to imagine on Sunday I'll be making my final walk out these doorways, my tassel turned to the left, approaching a future I can hardly wait for, but with which I am entirely uncertain about.

This year, the Class of 2016 won't be the only MHS community members to make way for a brave new future. After a term which has brought great change to a once chaotic, unorganized school system, Principal Layne Millington will be leaving Marblehead High School, too. I sat down with the departing principal to discuss his future plans, legacy at MHS, and what he hopes the Marblehead community can do for the next principal.

## **What are you most proud of accomplishing at MHS?**

"Peace and stability, which is huge. I mean, it was funny, when I got hired, the superintendent, who hired me, up and quit and the school committee at the time was in a state of turmoil with each other, that most of them actually resigned their positions. So, it's come a long way since that time."

## **How do you feel the community welcomed you in?**

"The first year was very tough, understandably so. I was brought in as a change agent to try to make it stabilized and get the school back on track. So when you come in and you're looking at making big changes, that typically doesn't sit well until people get some faith and trust that you are pushing things in the right direction. I think the faith and trust came probably about nine months in and then everything has been quiet since, which has been great. The first nine months was pretty tumultuous."

## **Has working at MHS changed or taught you anything?**

"It's interesting 'cause Swampscott was in a very similar position when I started there, so a lot of it was very similar work. I think a lot of it has helped me hone down what I want to do, for myself, for my family, for the future. I've loved being a principal; I wouldn't mind trying it again, but I think I'm going to start to look more for central office positions at this point in time. It helped me to kind of clarify that."

## **How does MHS compare to other schools you've worked at?**

"As a principal I've always been a change agent. So, in other words, having to come into a school that needs some work. I've never had the opportunity to come into a school that's been stable for a while. That would be something nice to try for a change, but, it's hard to say because I haven't had that comparison. If I go back to Belmont [where he was Vice Principal], it was good, it was fun. It certainly wasn't as stressful, but it also didn't have the challenges. Sometimes the challenges are fun, figuring out what you're going to do. There's so much you can accomplish."

**Do you have any advice for the incoming principal or the student body and other community members whom this change concerns?**

"The biggest gift they can give is making sure that they let the new principal come in and get on his feet. Give him the six to nine months he needs just to get to know people, to know things, and really work very hard to make sure it's a good place for him to be. He's coming into a much different building. There's still work to be done, but things are much more stable and he's actually going to have time to get in and get to know people."

**What are your plans for the future?**

"I was planning on taking some time off. I'm picking at positions here and there, but I wouldn't mind taking a year off. I let them know in November that I had no interest in renewing the contract. That was on purpose. I wanted to make sure they could get a first round choice for a replacement. Typically what happens, when the first positions open up, the pool for candidates is thick, so you tend to get the best."

To Mr. Millington and my fellow classmates of the graduating Class of 2016, enjoy the little moments for what they are during these final days at MHS, remember the triumphs you've overcome that have led you to that stage Sunday, and in the words of actress Troian Bellisario, "Embrace failure and fear as if they were your oldest and best friends, and dance, don't walk, to this new beginning."