



**Talk to CMS Board of Education
Pamela Grundy, 11 September 2012**

Start by saying thank you to this great group of educators for bringing this subject into public discourse, where it can become a key part of our community's efforts to improve our children's education.

Skeptics among you might be saying, this all touchy-feely stuff sounds very special, but how does it work in real life? Well, I'm here to tell you, based on my six years of experience at Shamrock Gardens Elementary, a high-poverty elementary school that was once one of CMS's most troubled schools, but was turned around by precisely the approach that they described.

I'll focus on one example.

When my son was in first grade, there was a first-year teacher down the hall. She had a challenging class, and was having a tough time. Everyone knew how much she was struggling. I shook my head and wondered what on earth she was doing in the classroom.

Principal Duane Wilson and his staff took a different, far wiser tack. They didn't berate her with lectures about "urgency" or about how she had better try harder because she was responsible for her students' destiny. Instead, they wrapped her in support. Administration brought in support staff and volunteers. Fellow teachers offered advice and shared their own struggles. One of our custodians gave her pep talks after school, while mopping the classroom floor.

What happened? Not only did she make it through the year, she has gone on to be an career teacher, no longer at Shamrock but still in CMS, and still at a high-poverty school.

This happened over and over. When Parker entered kindergarten, Shamrock still suffered from the revolving staff door that plagues so many high-poverty schools. But then the exodus stopped. We began to keep our skilled veterans. Especially important for the future of the district, the enthusiastic young teachers who had started their careers at Shamrock chose to stay, getting better every year. We weren't just hunting for great teachers, we were growing them. (It is Shamrock *Gardens* after all.)

They stayed because Shamrock had become a place where teachers wanted to be, a place where they knew that with hard work they could help students succeed, and a place where they knew their colleagues and superiors cared about them not just as employees, but as human beings.

In the spring of 2010, after having brought Shamrock's proficiency rates up ten points in the previous two years, 83 percent of Shamrock's teachers called the school "a good place to work and learn."

It is precisely that kind of caring, not only for our students, but also for the teachers and staff to whom we entrust them, that will move our district forward. Thank you.