



# **LAURA SCHWIRIAN JACOB**

## **Class of 1999**

**Laura Schwirian Jacob** is the Superintendent of the California Area School District and founder and Chief Executive Officer of the California Academy of Learning Charter School. During her brief three-year tenure as superintendent, her district has received local, state and national recognition for the opportunities it provides to children.

Jacob credits her love of education to the teachers she had at Elizabeth Forward. She is a fourth generation EFHS graduate. Her parents, Jay and Leslee Kight Schwirian, graduated from EF in 1973 and siblings Andrew Schwirian and Jackie Schwirian Lomenick in 2005 and 2006 respectively.

Duquesne University was where she earned four of her higher education degrees/certifications. Jacob received a B.S. and B.A. in Secondary English Education in 2003, a M.S. Ed in K-12 School Administration and Supervision and Principal Certification in 2006 and an Ed.D in Educational Leadership and Technology in 2012. Jacob received her Superintendent's Letter of Eligibility from California University of Pennsylvania. Additional certifications include a grant-funded Raspberry Pi Educator certification in Glasgow, Scotland, as the only U.S. representative. She further advanced her education at Harvard University with a Certificate in Advanced Educational Leadership in 2017 and a Certificate in School Management Leadership in 2018. She has continued to grow professionally by becoming a certified Google Educator and Apple Learning Coach, which she uses to support growth and provide opportunities for children and educators.

Her educational resume includes being an English teacher at Ringgold High School; an English teacher, Classrooms for Future Technology Coach, Assistant Principal and Assistant Superintendent at McGuffey School District; District Technology Coordinator at Kent County Public Schools in Maryland, and Assistant to the Superintendent at Connellsville School District. In 2020, Jacob was appointed to her present superintendent position.

In her current capacity at California Area, Jacob maintains a focus on creating schools where all children love learning, with a focus on teaching environmental sustainability. The Moonshot program eliminates grades and established an individualized learning plan for each learner. The Outdoor Science School program provides students their entire science curriculum outside over the summer in and off the grid learning environments. She leads Bee Club after school, where students maintain care of their four beehives on campus; 3D Violin Club, where students 3D print and learn how to play their own violin, and Girls' Leadership Tea, where girls learn leadership strategies. Jacob was a finalist for the Washington County Chamber of Commerce Athena Leadership Award last year.

Jacob's career includes awards of over \$9.5 million dollars in grants for the school district she has served. At California Area alone, grant funding has provided an aquaponics program on campus, a therapy dog program currently served by 12 dogs, goats and chickens for a Vet Tech program, solar-powered scooter, Trout in the Classroom and universal free meals for all students.

Under her leadership, California Area has been recognized for the unique experiences offered to children. The district was inducted into the League of Innovative Schools in 2020, for championing innovative approaches to teaching and learning and connects district personnel with like-minded educators from across the nation. This year, the district was recognized by the national School Superintendents Association as one of only six school districts across the country as a "Learning 2025 Lighthouse Demonstration System". This award recognizes districts that serve as role models for school systems across the country for their service to all learners. The U.S. Department of Education awarded California Area with the 2022 District Sustainability Award. It was the only district in Pennsylvania picked.

This year, the U.S. Department of Education recognized California Area for its environmental sustainable efforts with a "Green Ribbon Schools District award. There were only three recipients from Pennsylvania. Schools selected demonstrate a commitment to promote environmental awareness inside and outside the classroom. California Area coordinates activities within the district and with local partners to reduce environmental impact, energy use and food waster, conserve water, introduce sustainable transportation and increase recycling.

When not in school, Jacob enjoys learning Scottish fiddle and the Great Highland Bagpipes, while exploring the world.