

Dear Merrimack Families and District Staff~

As we conclude our second month of remote learning, our attention turns toward all the considerations that come with end of the year observances. Of course high school graduation, traditional sendoff celebrations for students transitioning to new schools within the district, general end of year celebrations for all students and retiree recognitions are just a few of the many observances that have been the subject of recent discussions among the district leadership team and other stakeholder groups. One of the unique aspects of Merrimack is the unique effort put into the building and sustaining of its school cultures-it is one of the many fine qualities of this school district and a significant, though perhaps under-recognized source of its strength.

Of course, in normal times planning for these traditional observances would be well under way. But these are not normal times. Now, beyond logistical considerations that always attend to such events we must add considerations of safety, including the absolute necessity of maintaining social distancing in an environment of on-going contagion. These considerations do not mean, however, that we will not maintain our traditions. It does mean that they will, of necessity, be altered in various ways. This is a year of firsts, and in some cases, that means we will be embarking on a different course in an effort to maintain our end-of year traditions. But here's the take-away: Though COVID-19 has taken much from us, it has not taken away our determination to maintain who and what makes us special. Our hope is that, when we look back on this time, we will remember not just that we had to do many things differently, but rather that we tried to do them at all, in spite of adversity and challenge. Our hope is that, in looking back, we remember that rather than focusing on what was not possible we channeled our collective energies into what was possible, and recall that those firsts, whatever they may be and whatever form they may take, were the result of our care and concern for one another. Our hope is that we recall that we worked hard to maintain tradition while at the same time caring enough for and about each other to do so carefully, considerately, and deliberately.

Over the coming days the district, and each of its schools, will be providing additional information about how we will go about observing our end of year traditions in this very different environment. In the meantime, please be assured of the fact that we all recognize the importance of this time of year and that, however they must occur, these traditions and observances will be conducted with care and enthusiasm in recognition of all that makes our school district special.

Stay well.

Mark McLaughlin  
Superintendent