

Dear Merrimack Families and District Staff~

Congratulations to you all. We made it! After a school year like no other in our lifetimes, and more twists and turns than any of us could ever have expected in September, after trauma, confusion, worry and uncertainty, we made it! After all the truly scary and worrying events that characterized the last third of this school year, this school district turned negativity into something else entirely and it has been inspiring to see. I saw more evidence of it today. Celebratory events at more of our schools provided evidence of the inspiration. So many families. So many students. So many educators. Cheering. Honking. Crying. Laughing. Expressions of thanks and best wishes for a healthy and happy summer shared between people who are, in some ways, more connected now than ever before. Today proved, once again, that the strength of a community is inextricably linked to the health and strength of its schools. And by any measure, these last days of the 2019-2020 school year provided concrete evidence that we are, and can continue to be, a strong and healthy community because, despite everything that has been thrown at us this year, our schools are as strong as they have ever been. [LINK https://youtu.be/k6Q-sHKwves](https://youtu.be/k6Q-sHKwves)

When the pandemic struck us in March, we, like all of you, didn't know what to expect or how it would work out. But like all of you, we just put our heads down and went to work. Families had burdens placed on them as never before, balancing their own work responsibilities with the demands of supporting remote learning and did so superbly. None of this was easy-all of this was hard. But through it all, the perseverance of our families and our students, combined with the excellent dedication of our educators, all of whom had their own pandemic related burdens to carry separate from their professional responsibilities, made it work. And the joyful celebrations I witnessed first hand over the last several days was an expression of the pride all of our students, their families, our educators and our school leaders rightfully felt for having so successfully weathered such a significant storm.

As I sit here this evening, on the last day of this school year, it is clear that this storm has not yet passed. I do not know when it will. As I have said on so many occasions over the last few months, we have made, and will continue to make, many important decisions as we continue to come to terms with the impact of this virus on our lives. At Monday night's school board meeting we will begin to lay out the path forward despite the massive uncertainties that still cloud that path. But on this last day of school I will reiterate the one unwavering commitment of this school district as it plans for the school year ahead-we will do everything in our power to provide for the health and safety of our students and staff. This may come with some hardship. It may come with some sacrifice. I cannot predict what that commitment will require us to do. But it is my profound hope that as we negotiate the complicated

path that continues to lie ahead of us this community will continue to do what it has so heroically done up to now—come together in the service of its students to provide them an excellent education in an atmosphere of safety, security and health. There truly can be nothing very controversial about that.

Tonight marks the end of my daily messages though I will certainly continue to provide our community with important updates as developments warrant throughout the coming months. I have received so many wonderful messages of support from so many of you over the last months and I am more grateful to you all for all of them than you will ever know. Although the volume of communication frequently made it difficult for me to respond to people individually, please accept my thanks for your kindness, which I recognize as being just as equally a voice of support for the students and staff of this marvelous school district.

We made it. I wish you all a happy, peaceful summer. Please continue to stay vigilant while you enjoy the beautiful days ahead. When we come together again as the next school year begins, in whatever form that may take, I look forward to continuing the inspiring partnership that we all forged together during this year like no other.

Stay well.

Mark Mclaughlin
Superintendent