



Celebrating with Hope

June 17, 2021

As our state rises out of the pandemic and opens its doors, our commencement activities last week were a bold statement of resiliency and hope for the future. The expressions of joy on the hundreds of faces of our students and their families who participated in the commencement drive-through celebrations, cheered on by the many employees at our District, were a reminder that the future is bright.



After all that this year's class has had to overcome in the past academic year – from adjusting to online classes to dealing with financial problems brought about by the pandemic – their elation at having an opportunity to celebrate their graduation in



person was evident. Some wore their regalia or decorated their cars with balloons or sprayed-on words. Many were joined by proud family members, and all of them had broad smiles!

The 2020-2021 academic year has been one of the most challenging years in the history of our District. We had to learn new ways to work and learn, turning spaces in our homes into offices and classrooms. It was a year marked by uncertainty, with ever-changing public health guidelines that tested our efforts to prepare and plan. In addition to our jobs, many of us also had to deal with our children who were being schooled at home or loved ones who were affected by the virus.

Despite these challenges, our District has made great strides this year. I am particularly proud of our efforts to promote diversity, equity and inclusion on our campuses and in our community.

As we end this academic year, like our graduates, I am hopeful for the future and looking forward to what lays ahead. Our employees are starting to return to the campuses to serve students next month, and we will be offering more in-person classes and services that our

students need and deserve. With more than 70% of eligible residents in the county getting vaccinated, we are seeing signs that we can put this pandemic behind us and begin returning to the activities we enjoy.

As the summer begins, join me in celebrating Juneteenth this Saturday, June 19, an event that marks the day in 1865 when the people of Texas were informed that enslaved people in the Confederate states had been freed from slavery. Now throughout our nation, Juneteenth commemorates the end of slavery and emphasizes education and achievement. This week, Congress overwhelmingly voted to recognize the significance of Juneteenth by passing a bill that would make it a federal holiday. President Joseph Biden is expected to sign the bill into law this week.

Like our almost 1,800 graduates, we have much to celebrate and to anticipate with great hope for the future. Thank you for your extraordinary efforts in this most difficult year, and I look forward to seeing you when we return to the campuses.

Have a good summer.

Lynn

Lynn Ceresino Neault, Ed.D., Chancellor