



SANTA MONICA - MALIBU UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

May, 2020

## Superintendent's Message to the Class of 2020

Dear Samohi, Malibu High School and Olympic High School Class of 2020,

The year 2020 will go down in history as an unprecedented global pandemic that has upended life for millions of people in the world, including the Class of 2020. We had envisioned seniors going to prom, looking forward to Grad Nites, attending awards banquets, playing spring sports and sending out graduation invitations to friends and family.

Instead, you are stuck at home finishing off your senior year with distance learning and its challenges, the events you were looking forward to cancelled, postponed or re-envisioned. You may be filled with an uneasiness and uncertainty about what the next weeks, months and even years, may hold.

Class of 2020, my heart aches for you. I am so sorry that the final, joyous moments of your preschool-12 experience have been cut short by a worldwide pandemic. When you started your senior year back in August, none of us had any way of knowing that it would end so differently than years past, without the same traditions that all of us have experienced and celebrated. Coronavirus would completely change life as we know it.

Even though the future is still undetermined, it still does not feel real that March 12 could have been your last day of high school, ever. We've heard the #OneMoreDay, and understand the desire to be together one more time. Some of you are mourning the loss of your senior year. Many of you feel frustrated and upset and question why this is happening to you. Some of you are just eager to move on and begin the next chapter of your lives.

One thing I know for certain, is that during this difficult time, you have learned lessons that you will carry with you for the rest of your life. In speaking with many of you, you have shared some of the ways these lessons and life skills will serve you well in college, career and beyond.

**Adapting to unexpected changes** — Your life changed overnight. You had to adapt in so many ways: from the way you do school, to the way you interact with your friends, to the way you maintain your social, physical and emotional health. Since we know the only constant in life is change, the more you are equipped to deal with it, the better.

**Working and learning remotely** — Just as you are distance learning from home, many of your parents are working remotely from home as well. Working and learning remotely will increasingly become the norm in a post-coronavirus world. The independence and ownership that you are displaying will serve you well.

**Managing your time** — In college and adult life, there are many distractions, just as there are at home currently. How do you decide when to study versus going surfing or shopping with your friends? Sleep in or work out? Do your job and fit in homework, too? Time management is one of the most important life skills you can master as a young adult, and many of you are receiving a crash course in it right now.



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**Cherishing moments with your family** — This unexpected time at home, for better or for worse, has increased the quality time you are spending with your family and loved ones. Make the most of it. Cherish every moment, as these moments will pass quickly as you grow older.

**Learning new life skills** — Some of you are taking the opportunity to learn new life skills during your extended time at home: cooking, cleaning, laundry, budgeting, home improvement work, home repairs, etc. As I like to say, some of the best learning can occur outside of the classroom.

**Becoming more resilient** — Michelle Obama once said, “You should never view your challenges as a disadvantage. Instead, it’s important for you to understand that your experience facing and overcoming adversity is actually one of your biggest advantages.” You are developing grit, resilience and determination as you struggle. Never forget that you are stronger for having experienced this moment in history together.

**Learning the importance of community and giving back** — I have heard many uplifting stories about our SMMUSD students making a difference in our communities. Students have been making masks and other protective gear, helping needy families with food and necessities, providing words of encouragement and goodie bags to medical workers and more. All around us, young people are taking the lead in giving back to those in need. We appreciate your leadership, compassion and generous hearts.

As your superintendent, know that I am incredibly proud of you. We know there’s no substitute for the traditional year-end ceremonies, but we have had discussions with students, staff and parents who are all working hard to plan alternatives that honor you and all that you’ve accomplished.

Class of 2020, this pandemic has given all of us more of an appreciation for life and the simple things we once took for granted. Many of us are longing for that opportunity just to see our friends face-to-face one more time. This experience has bonded all of us together as a stronger school community. While coronavirus may have taken away several months of your senior year, it can never take away the laughter, friendship and memories that you’ve made with your classmates, teachers and families over the past 13 years in SMMUSD.

Please connect with your school administration to learn how we are honoring and celebrating your graduation success.

Stay strong and know that your time at SMMUSD has prepared you for a brighter future. We wish you all the best in health and success in your future.

Your superintendent,

Dr. Ben Drati

SMMUSD