

HELLO 8<sup>th</sup> Grade, Class of 2020!

I'd like to stop for a moment, and shine the light on YOU, and your very unique journey...

I recall watching you walking in a line (sort of) down the hallway toward kindergarten. Some of you smiled broadly, others knotted fingers and gazed around not quite sure. Every grade level presented you with challenges and opportunities. Slowly you began to understand the daily routines, and what it meant to be a student. You learned to read, and gradually began reading to learn. Some of you had tutoring supports in place. Later as older students many of you became the tutor! Problem solving, making and keeping friends, and knowing just what you were good at started to take hold. There were those times of three steps forward, two back, but you've kept going. Your world was getting bigger, richer, and more complicated.

Along the way, classmates left: Grace, Cecilia, Clare, Josie, Dorothy, Vivi, Sydney, and Danny... Midway through 6<sup>th</sup> grade you experienced the loss of a dedicated teacher, fondly referred to as "Mr. E." Two more highly regarded teachers, Ms. Ellis and Mrs. Hieger, left at the end of that same year. In 7<sup>th</sup> grade, Mr. Santos left at the end of the year. And now, as 8<sup>th</sup> graders, you've been presented a huge challenge - COVID.

It signaled a lightening speed halt to regular school, cutting off so many prized and traditional activities. No more visits to the Mount, or leading Family Groups. No typical Talent Show, Jog-a-thon, Field Day, or Spring Concert. I watched you rehearse for the 8th Grade Musical, and you were rockin it! But now, no play. There will be no "typical" 8<sup>th</sup> grade gifts, or Light of Leadership mass. And graduation, it will look quite different.

But think back to those shy and hesitant kindergarteners. Look where they were, look where you are now. Each of you has grown, academically, socially, and emotionally. You've stretched and challenged yourselves, in sports, music, and art. Through service projects- doing for and giving to others- you've thought globally and acted locally. Your MDI video- (7<sup>th</sup> grade religion curriculum video) was celebrated nationally through the Archdiocese. As your teachers shared with me... "They are super creative, social justice focused, and a collaborative group of people who clearly persevere through the tough times." Yes! This is success! You guys have been tested, and just kept going...

We will make our way together through the remainder of the school year, different as that may look. And we will celebrate YOU, Class of 2020! As our world slowly shifts to greater normalcy, please, share the gift that is you! CONGRATULATIONS!

Heidi Ehrenberg    School Counselor