



TOMS RIVER REGIONAL SCHOOLS

MICHAEL CITTA

SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

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To our Toms River Regional Schools staff, families, and community members:

Each year as we come to a close for the summer, I reflect on the journey and the words of encouragement we leave our students as they prepare for break and a future of endless possibilities.

Over the years as a student, it was listening to my High School North administration telling me to steady your ship in the rough waters of your travels from the south, west, and east. And, as you set your course NORTH, may you travel into a horizon where the seas are always BLUE and the sky shines of GOLD.

Or, when I was principal at Hooper Avenue Elementary, we referred to our Husky mascot when we talked about the tracks that you make for the pack to follow.

And, of course, as principal at High School South, I would remind our graduates that as a member of our tribe, like the Native Americans in the region before them, they would be handed a feather for every act of courage, kindness, bravery and accomplishment. One day those collective feathers would create the most beautiful headdress that would make them the “Chief” of their own tribe, and then they would be responsible for handing out those feathers themselves.

These words of encouragement, which are uttered and heard in each and every building, serve to identify the individual school and its culture, but have themes that resonate for anyone, anywhere throughout greater Toms River, and coincide with what our students hear at home from the greatest support group anyone could have— their families.

This merging of the individual—student, school, and family—and the collective “us” stands out at this time of year, especially when I look out into the crowd of a graduation or moving-up ceremony. The planning and preparation it takes to host just *one* of these year-end events is remarkable, and requires dozens and dozens of individual, dedicated people with a wide range of talents. (Then add to that 18 more buildings and just ... wow.) But the end result is one, cohesive celebration enjoyed by all.

But much more so than logistics, I marvel at the fact that each of our 14,679 students and 2,295 staff members has a montage of memories playing in their head at this time of year chronicling the past 10 months. For each of those children there’s a parent or two, or a guardian who’s sharing in that joy or bittersweet feeling, a teacher or two or hopefully more who’s made a



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difference in that child's life, a coach or advisor or counselor who's done the same, and numerous others who've shaped the course of their year's journey.

There's a beautiful dichotomy in marveling at tens of thousands of people working together to make a school year a success, and recognizing and honoring the unique experience of each individual. That's what I treasure most about this time of year— looking out into a crowd and seeing a single face; handing one student a diploma and seeing an army of supporters behind them.

As we wind down the 2022-2023 school year and begin to enjoy all of those memorable year-end celebrations and personal montages, I want to, on behalf of my team here, thank each and every one of you for making this year special. May you forever treasure your school, your mascot and colors, and the theme of the words of encouragement you will receive or utter, while knowing and appreciating your part in the big picture of our mission. It's both your individual excellence and your role in the collective "us" that defines this district, and which makes the greater Toms River community what it is—the biggest small town around.

The school year is complete. We did it. YOU did it. Congratulations, and once again, thank you! I wish you all a safe, happy, and healthy summer.

Sincerely,

Michael Citta
Superintendent of Schools