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Dear Parents and Students:

Today is National Teacher Appreciation Day!

Each year across the nation, we celebrate **Teacher Appreciation Week** during the first week of May, and we are sending you this week's message on this day because today is **National Teacher Appreciation Day**. The impact of our teachers, counselors and student services personnel on our students commonly lasts a lifetime. We know this because when we ask most adults, *"Who was an individual who helped shape the direction of your life and helped you become the person you are,"* many people will name a teacher or coach. Among our own teachers and coaches, nearly all will cite a previous teacher as having a profound influence on them.

While the current public health restrictions have certainly altered the way our schools currently operate, our sincere appreciation and gratitude for all our dedicated staff members remains unchanged. Our teachers have worked steadfastly to maintain connections with their students and have adapted to the new arena of remote instruction to continue students' learning. As my tenure as superintendent nears its close, one of the true highlights has been the opportunity to ask students to name a teacher or staff member who made the difference for them. We all can celebrate and be genuinely grateful that every student names at least one teacher – with many students asking to name more than one!

Every school community gets its vision, direction and heart from its principal. This past Friday was **National School Principals' Day**. Amid this period of redefining how we will meet the needs of our students, our principals and their teams continue to lead and guide our staff members and students with energy, clarity and assurance. We are fortunate to have the tireless, non-stop service and leadership of each of our principals and their dedicated teams.

Staying on our path of celebrations and appreciation, tomorrow is **National School Nurse Day**. We are fortunate in District 211 to have the care and professional services that our school nurses always provide to support our students and our staff members. Our school nurses serve many who have an array of complex human conditions, all of which we welcome in our public schools.

Each person's contributions throughout the District create the complete community that serves our students and parents. Our counselors, social workers, psychologists and specialized therapists of many kinds provide quality, professional services to students each day. Our food services staff members provide over a million meals to

students each year and their dedication is brightly evident during this crisis as they deliver meals to approximately 5,000 students each week. On a typical day, our transportation department travels nearly 9,000 miles, but now our vehicles transport food supplies rather than students. Our office professionals and student supervisors are commonly the first point of contact for our students and parents. Our custodial and maintenance staff keeps our facilities clean and updated, always appearing fresher than their actual age. And now more than ever, our technology staff members maintain a world-class network that provides the means for our students, teachers and families to engage in countless exchanges.

In order to deliver and sustain the extraordinary experiences that District 211 provides, we know that it takes all of us working together. Since the middle of March when we first closed our schools, everyone has responded brilliantly, and we are grateful.

Opportunity to Benefit District 211 Families in Need

While the people in our schools and the many opportunities we would typically provide play a critical role in the development of our students, we know that each student's parents, guardians and extended family serve as the primary foundation for each student's development. We also know that this unprecedented public health pandemic has devastated the stability of many families and households. Few messages are more heart wrenching than a humble request from a student – likely written without the request or awareness of the student's parent – seeking help and support for their family because of significant hardship in the student's household.

In next week's communication, we will provide a link with information describing how people might consider donating to the District 211 Foundation to assist District 211 families in need during this unparalleled time.

Closing Weeks of the Semester

We are particularly mindful of our graduating seniors. Throughout the duration of this challenging time, our seniors have demonstrated inspiring optimism, touching expressions of creativity and remarkable fortitude. People throughout the District are proud of all you have accomplished, and we are certain that our future is in very good hands with our seniors.

Over the next two weeks, each school's graduation drive-through celebration will offer the opportunity for students to see teachers, administrators and other members of our faculty. Many people continue to work diligently so that we might somehow be able to conduct in-person graduation ceremonies over the summer.

For the students who will continue with us next year, consistent with the end of every school year, the final two weeks in the semester are important to finish strong and to complete any remaining projects. If any staff member is able to provide assistance to any student or parent, we encourage you to reach out to us.

May you and all your family remain healthy.

Daniel E. Cates
Superintendent

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