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BOARD OF EDUCATION
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April 20, 2020

Dear Stockton Unified Class of 2020,

You have always been destined to be a class like no other. Born in the wake of 9/11, a time that our nation experienced a deep sense of unity and togetherness, after an unbelievable and unexpected tragedy, we have followed your journey with great interest and pride.

We welcomed many of you into our district as bright and eager kindergarteners. We embraced you as our own as you walked through the school doors for the very first time. As you traded your family's hand for ours, we promised to take good care of you.

And every fall, we welcomed you **BACK TO SCHOOL**, which then led to **HARVEST** celebrations and memorials for **DIA DE LOS MUERTOS**. We cut **RED RIBBONS** and showed our collective **SPIRIT** as we **KICKED OFF** fall sports with friendly rivalries and **HOOPED IT UP** through the winter months. We **RALLIED** together and tried to leave the **DRAMA** on the stage. We watched excitedly as you each **MARCHED** to the beat of your own drum and taught us the Tuxes and Tennies were a thing. Each spring, we **OPENED OUR HOUSE** to show off all that you had accomplished throughout the year. We made sure you stayed on **TRACK** so that you could **HIT IT OUT THE PARK** when the time came.

And this was supposed to be that time - your senior year. The time when you took your victory lap - memorializing the "last time" for each event, activity, and engagement. This was the year that all your hard work and sacrifice was leading up to. The year for senior trips and senior prom; the year for senior recognitions and senior award nights; the year for senior breakfast and senior rallies; the year for senior ditch day and senior trips. This was to be that year!

This global pandemic has put a halt to all that this year was planned to be. And as a community, we grieve with you. If you are feeling that this situation is unfair, you are right. And if you are feeling upset, it is understandable. And if you are feeling cheated, you were. There is no way to minimize what you are experiencing or to make up for what you are losing this year.

But, even in the midst of hard times, we all have the power to make the most of it. **YOU** have the power to decide to take all that this year has thrown at you and use it as fuel for a future better than the one that you had imagined.

This is an opportunity to stand up and show the world that even though your year may have been disrupted, you will not be defeated!

You are resilient. You are brilliant. You are innovative. You are **#StocktonStrong!** If there has ever been a group of young people who could overcome and succeed, it is you.

So, even though you may be apart from your friends, we encourage you to still stay connected virtually. Though you may not be sitting in classrooms right now, we encourage you to still take advantage of every learning opportunity that comes your way. Though you may not be ending the year with the traditional festivities, we encourage you to still celebrate your achievements, in the ways that you can.

And just as at the beginning of your life journey, we are once again experiencing an unbelievable and unexpected tragedy. And just as we did before, we will rise up, we will triumph, and we will be better because of it. And we will do it together, with your class leading the way.

So, as we slip your hand out of ours and gently place it into the hands of the future, we do so with full hearts, great pride and complete confidence that you are going to continue to change the world!

In closing, we invite you to hold onto these words by Mahatma Gandhi. “A small body of determined spirits fired by an unquenchable faith in their mission can alter the course of history.”

Go and make history!

-Written by Ilesha Graham

Sincerely,

Your Stockton Unified Team

