



UNIVERSAL FAMILY OF SCHOOLS

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A note of thanks as we close a challenging school year



To all members of the Universal Schools Community:

As we come to the end of this unique and often challenging school year, I would like to take a few moments to say thank you.

Thank you to the Board of Directors for all the leadership and support it has provided throughout the COVID-19 crisis.

Thank you to all our administrators, teachers, and support staff who pulled together to help our scholars and families and each other.

To everyone within our organization, thank you for your willingness to change direction at almost a moment's notice when we were forced to close our buildings in March 2020. We pulled together to completely rethink how we do business – from instruction to food service to technology to maintenance and operations.

Your daily messages to scholars, videos, drive-up, and outdoor promotion ceremonies, and all the other out-of-the-box ideas helped keep our scholars connected to our schools.

Thank you again to our teachers, support staff, and administrators for your commitment to our scholars and delivery of quality instruction. This work could not have been done without you.

Almost every aspect of our professional lives changed due to this pandemic, and I am grateful for the way we responded. However, no matter how we move forward under the precautions that are still so necessary due to this disease, we know that we will never be the same.

The times we are experiencing will be the subject of history and economics, and social lessons for generations to come. The work we are doing every day is groundbreaking, and it will continue to be.

But this crisis also has provided us with the opportunity to think about all aspects of our work differently. It has allowed us to examine how we can take advantage of technology to be more flexible in meeting the needs of every scholar.

Nothing will ever take away the need for, and the value of, the personal connections that are so vital to the work we do. However, the creativity you have displayed in sustaining virtual learning has been exemplary.

I also would like to thank our scholars and families.

The pandemic has stressed all of us in every aspect of our daily lives. However, from an educational perspective, it took away the reassuring custom of a daily physical gathering at school and the comfort that came with that.

Suddenly, in its place, we had a solitary and sometimes isolated experience. Aside from the serious health concerns of COVID-19, this may have been the biggest challenge of all.

Our scholars and families faced it with courage and resilience. I am grateful for that strength.

I want to express my thanks to our community partners as well. Whether it was organizing a team of volunteers to support our school efforts or donating thousands of pajamas and bookbags to help us deliver Chromebooks and return materials to our students, our communities were there in our time of need. As it always is.


Finally, I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge the collective efforts of our central and corporate leadership team. Each division has been critical in the success of our transition to our online platform and is now planning for re-opening in the fall.

Their leadership was unmatched through weekly academic check-ins and updates to keep our administrators abreast of the many requirements that needed to be met. In addition, they have been instrumental beyond the walls of the school building in connecting with various families who may need additional wraparound support and connections to community services.

These last fourteen months have not been what any of us planned for. Instead, they have challenged us and offered us new opportunities every single day. Together, we have responded to the best of our ability and in the best interest of our students.

Have a fantastic summer, and we cannot wait to see all our scholars, staff and families in the fall.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Penny Nixon", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Dr. Penny Nixon
Superintendent/CEO of Schools