

April 9, 2020

Dear SDPC Family,



Spring Break begins on Friday, April 10th and continues through Friday, April 17th. This break looks much different than what we originally had planned. In the past 3 weeks, we have all witnessed many unprecedented changes in our daily lives. As the governor made the decision to close schools for our safety, we made a shift to eLearning. We are fortunate that our district was well prepared for this transition. I applaud our SDPC staff for rising to the challenge of educating our students in a very unfamiliar setting. We have more than 16,400 students, and our teachers have made direct contact with all but 24, of which several have moved out of county. I also commend our students for choosing to take on an active role in the continuation of their education. Finally, I am so appreciative to all the parents and guardians who have encouraged and supported their children during this endeavor. Together we are all guiding our students through a monumental period in history. We appreciate your trust, cooperation and flexibility as we have shifted to a new way of serving our students.

In a recent episode of her new podcast, *Unlocking Us*, author Brené Brown talks about how, with this pandemic, fear and scarcity are driving our culture. We know what fear is. Scarcity is when we feel like there isn't enough, that we are not enough. Empty grocery store shelves and the difficulty finding toilet paper and hand sanitizer are examples of how fear and scarcity are driving us right now. Brown describes how comparison is immediately triggered when we are in the modes of fear and scarcity. We wonder, "Who has more? Who is doing it better?" And this leads to feeling like we are not good enough.

I want to remind you that we don't know everyone's stories, situations, or personal struggles. What we see, hear, and read about is people's "highlight reel." What one person does may not be right for someone else. We need to stop and remember that each of us are doing things in a way that are true to our own style. Yes, trying new things, taking risks, and stepping out of our comfort zone are important. But, comparing what we do to what others do can leave us feeling like we are not enough and that we have to do more.

Brown explains that an answer to comparison is empathy. To have empathy for others, we need to have empathy for ourselves. So, I want you to know – parents, guardians, students, staff - **you are doing great!** You are exploring the distance learning thing and making it better daily (even though we wish we didn't have to), whether you feel comfortable with technology or not, whether you have "Webexed" yet or not. What someone else does is not necessarily what you have to do. It's okay. You are enough. I am doing the best I can and I know you are, too! We are proud of all of you!

We wish to express gratitude to our entire community of families, staff, volunteers, and community partners for your patience and support during these uncertain times. Although our buildings remain closed, we will continue to meet the academic and social-emotional needs of our students and families. During this time, while we are staying at home, find ways to give hope. Find ways to show love. Be a good neighbor. Remember that in order to have empathy for others, we need to have empathy for ourselves. We are here for you and ask that you be there for others as well.

Best Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Danny B. Merck". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Danny Merck

