

Dear **Cardinal** Staff and Families,

As 2021 comes to a close, reflection will be critical to moving into 2022 with a mindset of gratitude and growth, a heart for raising the bar on the human experience, and a dedication to living #theCARDINALway.

### **Gratitude and Growth:**

I am grateful for all the opportunities to learn with and from all of you.

Likewise, I am an avid reader and in order to grow, consider the words of leaders around our state and world.

When reading the latest Iowa *Business Record*, a few challenging, pandemic-focused, quotes lingered in my thoughts,  
and

I am sharing them with you:

- *No one is their best self during a pandemic. And, we are still in one.*
- *These will be many instances of folks wanting support without personally knowing how to be supportive of themselves and others.*
- *Inequities and pain in our society are amplified.*
- *Everything seems loud, so hush to really listen. Validate the hurt others feel and affirm that you are staying curious and wanting to understand.*
- *Things take longer to plan during pandemics; many deadlines must be pushed back. This is not a failure; it is an opportunity to build solid foundations by serving the most pressing current need.*
- *Burnout is occurring far more often; pacing, self-care, and community-care are essential.*
- *Food insecurity is skyrocketing.*
- *As the adage goes, the only thing that is constant is change.*
- *The status quo will not work. (We've always done it this way.)*

### **The Human Experience:**

Several of the leaders within this issue centered their message around "heart power and connection."

Here are some of their thoughts:

- *Trust your intuition and don't take that shortcut. Lean into your feelings, don't be afraid to ask for help. Know others are there for you.*
- *Lead and live with empathy and humility. Give yourself some grace when you mess up. Because you will.*
- *On a personal level, commit to learning more about yourself, your students and your colleagues. Your story matters. So does mine, and his and hers.*
- *There are countless ways to engage. Your community needs you now more than ever.*
- *Just as an entire community shares a sense of trauma, they must also share a sense of solidarity in order to heal together.*
- *While on a journey, the best lessons in life are the ones that affirm who you are, where you come from, and where you want to go.*
- *Now is the time we must move out of our own comfort zone and work together to be the difference in all that we say and do for each other. Congressmen John Lewis often quoted, "If not us, then who? If not now, then when?"*
- *We must continue to stand up, step up and speak out against anything that isolates, eliminates, or discriminates against those we serve or against one another.*

**Dedication to #theCARDINALway:**

Each leader within my reading over the past weeks has echoed the same message, "Together, we are better." When I consider what this means to our district, the following comes to mind:

- *#theCARDINALway requires students, community, staff, business partners, administrators, teachers, and board members working as one team.*
- *Each one of us is responsible for cultivating our culture. The grass is greener where it is watered.*
- *It is critical to enable people to do the right things at the right time and for the right reasons.*
- *The best way to serve students, care for ourselves and respect one another is to know one another's heart. Take time to connect on a personal level.*

As you leave for winter break, please, consider how you will return in 2022 with a mindset of gratitude and growth, a heart for raising the bar on the human experience, and a dedication to living #theCARDINALway.

All my best in 2022,

Chris