



PALO ALTO SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL

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Kimberly Diorio
Principal

November 25, 2014

Dear Vikings,

Let me start by acknowledging the past few weeks have been difficult for many people in our school community. During this time, our counselors and mental health team have worked around the clock, supporting our friends and colleagues at Gunn High School, as well as meeting with many Paly students and families to address their varying emotional needs. Our teachers have encouraged conversations in their classrooms and made referrals to our Crisis Response Team, while many adults have found themselves simply wanting to reach out to let students know how much we care about them.

I'm extremely grateful for the responsiveness and professionalism of all of the compassionate people on our campus who have taken our students under their wings in recent weeks. Author William Arthur Ward wrote, "**Feeling gratitude and not expressing is like wrapping a present and not giving it.**" With his words in mind, I'd like to briefly express my Paly gratitude with you:

- I'm grateful that we're nearing the end of our WASC self-study and have established [goals](#) that address stress, student engagement, innovation and empathy.
- I'm grateful our school has partnered with [Challenge Success](#).
- I'm grateful for our awesome Administrative Team who work hard and always make me laugh.
- I'm grateful Spirit Week was a huge success. Thank you ASB and Sensei Hall!
- I'm grateful for our two beautiful new buildings and the positive impact they have had on learning.
- I'm grateful we're under construction for a new Performing Arts Center.
- I'm grateful we're able to send teams of teachers to conferences like [Learning Forward](#), [National Science Teachers Association conference](#), [Google Summit for Educators](#) and [Kagen](#).
- I'm grateful we have many teachers who are lifelong learners and are excited about improving their practice by taking advantage of these opportunities.
- I'm grateful our community values and supports our school. Thank you to all of those who have donated to PiE and have joined the PTSA.
- I'm grateful we have many, many parents that work in partnership with us to create a culture of care.
- Mostly, I'm grateful for the students who make me laugh, cry, and continually impress me with their kindness, enthusiasm and honesty. You are the best part of my day.

Last week, I sent an email to the Paly staff requesting that they enjoy their upcoming break and get some much needed and well deserved "P.D.F" - play time, down time, family time. (PDF is a term we have embraced through our recent partnership with Challenge Success). The feedback I received was overwhelmingly positive, and it was suggested that I share an excerpt of that email with you, which said:

"Over Thanksgiving break, I'm going out of town. No work. Lots of PDF. I can't wait to sleep, play with my kids and hopefully get rid of this lasting cough/cold. I hope you will consider not working and getting lots of PDF too. I'm giving you permission to not be perfect. Permission to not grade papers. Permission to not write letters of rec. Permission to not prepare lesson plans or think about your "day job." Permission to let it go and instead, focus on your self and enjoying the holiday break with friends and/or family. You deserve it and your work with our students will be better if you take this time for yourself.

Speaking of our students, I'd like you to consider the same need for a break for our students. Like most of you, our students need time to relax, unwind, sleep, spend time with their families, and process their own grief having recently lost a peer. **It would be great if you would consider not having any major papers, major tests or major assignments due the Monday following the Thanksgiving break.** I know our students and parents would appreciate your compassion and embrace the precious work-free time so they can just be together. Our community is still healing, despite how our students may outwardly appear on the surface or present in your classroom.

Please know I care about you. I care about our students. I care about their parents. I care about our school and this community. I come to you with good intentions and a request for our entire school to take a much needed, well-deserved work-free break. We have so much to be thankful for this Thanksgiving.”

This holiday season, I hope all of you will make time for some PDF in your life and seek out ways you can express your gratitude. On behalf of the entire staff at Palo Alto High School, we wish you a relaxing and rejuvenating Thanksgiving break.

Warmly,

Kim Diorio

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