School Year Kick Off – Message from Superintendent 8.17.2020

Jason Mellema: Hello team Ingham ISD good morning or Good afternoon based on when you were actually watching this. I deeply thank you for everything that you have done throughout this summer to continue finding solutions as we look forward to this upcoming school year. For some of you, it's been continuing with those commitments that you've had and finding ways to complete the requirements of your job. For others of you you've had some time to rest and relax before the students have returned. So I hope all of us continue to take a positive approach as we enter into the 2021 school year and let me be the first to welcome you back and join us as we continue to find solutions to make sure that we have the success and achievement of all learners in mind in all that we do. So as we're ready to start a new school year just a couple of words and thoughts of kind of reflect on the challenges that we've had throughout the summer. And what we might have, as well as we look forward to this upcoming school year. 'cause I think this school year in some ways will be anything but normal. It's going to continue to be a challenge in a struggle as I speak right now. It is currently Monday, August the 17th. We are going through some changes with legislation as well. And if we've learned nothing throughout this situation, we've learned that we have to be flexible. We've learned that we have to recognize that change is probably going to be our only constant, and in that flexibility is where we're going to find our strength. And so I'm encouraging you to lean into some of these challenges in some of these storms that are going to be surrounding us. This storm started way back in March, and it's not something right now that has shown to be ended, but it's during this storm when we find our tremendous strength. One of the stories that I relayed to our administrators is the story of Oak trees and palm trees and how important it is to understand those differences. See if I think about Oak trees. Oak trees have tremendous strength. They're stately, they stand up right. They're The wood that you wanna be using for the strength that it has. I think of palm trees. I think of trees that are, you know, more summer, southern Caribbean flexible. They just kind of stand there. They move in the wind a lot. So tremendous differences between the two of them. But when the hurricane hits. Those differences shine through. Oak trees because they're not flexible typically don't make it through. They get shredded. They become uprooted. They break halfway up. Palm trees with a deep root system and incredible flexibility. Typically make it through. They've learned they have to adapt to the storms because the storms don't only happen once in awhile. The storms happen regularly down South when the Hurricanes come. That ability to be flexible is what's needed, and that flexibility is something that we're going to have to continue to show throughout this storm as well. But with that flexibility will come our greatest Call, and it continues to be the call that we've had, and it's emulated in our strategic plan. It's that call out for the success and achievement of all learners. And so I'm asking you to join me this year to continue to be flexible and consider the differences between a palm tree, an Oak Tree and where do we want to stand this year? How do we want to be remembered? What does this mean for kids? They're are the ones that are depending on us. You have to recognize that there's an old Chinese proverb that "out of the hottest fires from the strongest metals." In some ways this will be a hot fire this year. there will be challenges and critics from all areas calling and wondering what are we doing in education? And throughout those challenges throughout those fires, we'll become stronger. I have to laugh. Diamonds are forged because of tremendous pressure and this year I'm asking you to become a diamond to illuminate and reflect the brightness that you see in
your students' eyes everyday. Let that shine out. Let that continue to be your call and your mission. And what you value for kids. Because they're going to show up everyday wanting the same things that they wanted in the past and maybe actually needing more. They're going to need more support, not less. They're going to need more ways to connect in and communicate. And be able to see that you value them. When times you don't get a chance to see them everyday. So I'm asking you to join me along this journey in the same things that I asked you in May, but now it's even more important and that solutions focused. It's the what can we do to help kids? How can we continue to make a difference? At times when we might be more physically distanced than what we're used. How do we build the relationships we know that are so important or made to lean into during these times of challenge, when the storms are swirling and surrounding us when we have to be flexible. When the fires are going to be the hottest. I recently heard a quote from Inky Johnson. Former football player from the University of Tennessee who was paralyzed during his time of playing. Tremendous story about adversity and overcoming the challenges of life. And the quote that he gave was that people don't burn out in life because of what they do. They burn out in life because of what life makes him forget why they do it. Let us not forget the reasons that you come here every day. Let us not forget. How these kids are depending on us. They depend on you. They depend on your spirit. They depend on your creativity. They depend on you to find solutions to help them reach their goals. Don't burn out because of life a coronavirus because of legislation because of changes that are happening around us. Find the inner core that brought you here. And allow the diamonds within yourself to illuminate and shine brightly in that light. Be flexible. Keep focused and we will get through this together. It's going to be a challenging 2021 school year. Nobody will deny that. But I truly believe that we will get through this journey and come out of this a stronger steel. We're going to come do this journey and continue to find ways that make a difference to allow kids. All of our learners to be successful in achievement. So thank you very much what you do. I am deeply appreciative for the ways that you continue to find solutions. I want to work next to you as we think about this school year and all school years in the future and want to wish all of us a happy and successful solutions focused 2021 school. Thank you so much everybody.

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