

Center Moriches Union Free School District

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Dear Colleagues and Friends,

I hope that your summer vacation has provided time to reflect, relax, and enjoy moments with family and friends. As Superintendent, I am excited to welcome everyone back and invite you to Staff Conference Day on September 1st, where we will begin to renew our vision for the upcoming school year.

The past several years in education have proven to be a whirlwind of unprecedented change. Often these changes have presented difficulties for us to overcome, problems for us to solve, and challenges for us to rise above. Undoubtedly, the expectations for achievement are extraordinary, the curriculum has become more demanding, and these new trends in teaching and learning are daunting. However, recognizing that our mission has always been one of "reaching for the stars" and achieving excellence, we can take note of the words of the Latin philosopher Seneca, *Per aspera ad astra*, "To the stars through difficulties," and embrace the difficulties and challenges presented and view them in a positive light as opportunities, once again, to show that we are not satisfied simply with the *status quo*, but are always striving for the "stars" – excellence.

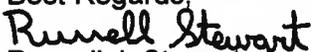
If the changes in the world of education seem endless, we must be equally relentless in our exploration of opportunities that will improve our educational system. These opportunities also exist within each of us and in our students. We need to build our capacity as educators and sharpen our skills and craft through professional development. It is in this arena that we all have the potential to become leaders. We possess the knowledge, creativity, and drive to share our collective wisdom through collegial collaboration. Hence, it is our obligation to seek out the most effective programs, models, and resources to enhance professional practice for the benefit of Center Moriches students.

Similarly, we need to continue to be proactive and seek out exceptional academic, athletic, and extra-curricular programs that will provide the skills our students need to succeed in all aspects of their lives. We have all witnessed the positive energy our students possess in the classroom, on the stage, on the athletic field, and in all corners of our schools. From their extraordinary accomplishments, to their small acts of kindness, our students have displayed a strong sense of character as well as a capacity for outstanding achievement. Our mission should be to build upon these examples.

As we approach the beginning of a new school year, I believe our collective abilities, commitment to collaboration, and positive outlook, will allow us to be at the center of change, rather than laboring to keep up with it. Our passion for teaching and learning has led us to great endeavors in the classrooms of Center Moriches – and if we commit to understanding change as new opportunities for growth, we will certainly strengthen our learning community.

Please plan to meet together for a general session on Tuesday, September 1st, at 8:30 a.m., at Center Moriches High School. Good fellowship and refreshments will be available in the cafeteria starting at 8:00 a.m. I am looking forward to meeting with you as we embark on yet another exceptional school year.

Best Regards,



Russell J. Stewart

Superintendent of Schools