



I am sure that you never thought that this day would come! It is the final day with students for the 2020 – 2021 school year and many didn't think we would make it this far. You have all been under an incredible amount of stress since March of 2020. Many on the outside trying to tell schools what is best for kids and not listening to what you, as teachers, had to offer for advice. We have changed models, changed schedules and changed our minds so many times that it was hard to keep track of true nature of teaching. Thankfully, you didn't forget about our students and gave them the best you could offer under the given circumstances.

Elementary level and Special Ed Services get a special shout out for being in person with students from the beginning of the year! You were unsung heroes that created a pathway for the secondary when they started in person learning this spring. Without you, I truly don't believe that secondary could have back as safely as they did. Your multitudes of question regarding airflow, cleaning, process and procedure helped to guide secondary's transition back to the classroom. I also want to thank the Specialists and secondary staff that had to teach hybrid until the end of the year. There is no question hybrid is the most challenging and possibly least effective model for teaching. Unfortunately, due to many reasons, it couldn't be avoided this year.

I started my teaching career in 1986 and I can honestly say that I have never seen such a physically and emotionally demanding year in education. People often forget that you not only had to deal with how to reach your students in these different models, but many of you had to figure out how to deal with your own children. Where were they going to learn? What about daycare? What happens if they are ill? What if you all are quarantined?

Yet, through all of this, I believe some positives were found. I think your professionalism was exemplified by how well you managed your jobs through all the changes. You have shown our families that, although not perfect, that students were still learning this year. The district was able to identify some major gaps in delivery of education, equity among our students and equity among our staff. Out of necessity, I have seen a greater resiliency building within our staff. Certain parts of teaching may be conducted differently in the future, such as conferences or meetings. Think of all the learning that took place in regards to technology for families, students and staff.

So, as this difficult year comes to a close, I sincerely thank you all for your effort and time spent doing your best for students. Thank you to all the staff that are retiring this year! We didn't get to present to you in the way that you deserve. Know that you will be missed next fall by your colleagues, but they also will be a tad bit jealous of you as well! Rest, relax and try to recharge over the summer.....you all deserve it!

Dan Kuhlman, President
Rochester Education Association
dan.kuhlman@edmn.org
507-319-7321