

## THINKING ABOUT PROGRESS

Dear Parents

Last Friday was the district PTA Honorary Service Awards Luncheon. This annual event honors some of the most dedicated parents for their unique contributions to our young people and our community. If you go to the Palo Alto PTA website ([paloaltopta.org](http://paloaltopta.org)), you can learn more about these amazing community volunteers and the special ways that they make our lives and those of our children better.

The previous week I attended my wife's college reunion where I sat in on a presentation by the college president and her second-in-command where they discussed issues that sounded remarkably similar to those we face here in Palo Alto – how to challenge our students appropriately, prepare them for the future, find and reward outstanding teaching, and increase institutional efficiency. It struck me that these topics may have a new urgency, but also possess timelessness and resonance for all education leaders.

And this week I celebrate my son's promotion and my daughter's graduation. I may have to finally admit to my children that they are more mature, better educated, and generally have it together so much more than I did as a teenager. And as I interact with their classmates, this seems to generally hold true for them as well.

These three events share a common thread – optimism about and a commitment to the future. The PTA volunteers know their sacrifices make the world a better place. My wife's college president knows the work she takes on will never be complete, but she will leave a little less unfinished work for her successor. She, like the PTA volunteers, will undoubtedly leave her mark and make her contribution.

And what of my children and yours? To be a parent, or a teacher for that matter, is to believe fully that the next generation will be somehow better than ours. And we have a duty to make it so. And just like our parents and parents' parents' generation, it seems certain that it will be.

The end of the year is hard. I heard another educator joke about "the 100 days of May and the 50 days of June." While there is often a collective relief that we have crossed the finish line of another school year, I hope you have time to savor the good parts of this year and nurture your optimism about the future. For, as the poet Max Ehrmann writes in *Desiderata*, "With all its sham, drudgery, and broken dreams, it is still a beautiful world."

Sincerely

Kevin Skelly, Ph.D.  
Superintendent