

Another Journey Begins



We've reached that time of year when if you cup your hand around your ear and listen real close, you can probably just make out the opening strains of Pomp and Circumstance. That's how near we are to closing out another school year and sending another class of graduates on to their next adventure.

From my days as a high school principal, I remember this time as being somewhat bittersweet - knowing I would miss all the faces of those who were leaving our school, but being filled with excitement about all the possibilities awaiting them. I still feel a sense of excitement at this time of year, and in that spirit I'd like to offer a special message for all the Kansas students who will graduate from high school this year.

After wishing you congratulations, the number one thing I want to tell you is, you're not done yet. Whether you'll be going on to college or a technical or vocational school, whether you'll be entering the military or the workforce, your days of study and exploration are not done yet. And that's not a bad thing.

It should give you a sense of exhilaration to know that you're not done learning and you're not done achieving. We are privileged to live in an age when we are constantly presented with new ideas, new innovations and new frontiers. Each day we're challenged to know more and to explore more. Consider just a few of the innovations of the past 20 years that have revolutionized how we live our lives. The Internet, personal computers and laptops, cell phones, e-mail and voice mail, global positioning systems, digital cameras, ATMs - the list goes on and on. The people who helped bring us those innovations knew they weren't done yet. They weren't done asking questions and looking for the answers, they weren't done setting goals and working to achieve them and they certainly weren't done learning.

Recently, the World Future Society released a list of the top 10 breakthroughs that will transform life over the next 20 to 30 years. Included on the list were things like alternative energy, desalination of water, precision farming, biometrics and nanotechnology. Whether you'll be in the group that helps further the innovations in these areas, or whether you'll be in the group that uses and benefits from those innovations, you cannot afford to ever consider yourself done learning.

So as you prepare to take your next steps following high school, let me issue you this challenge: never stop asking questions and never settle for the easy answer. Think big in whatever you decide to do and always look for your next learning opportunity. I wish you success in your journey.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Diane".

Dr. Diane Debacker
Kansas Commissioner of Education