



## **Script of Dr. Block's June 16, 2022 Video Message**

Hello Livingston Public Schools Community this is Matt Block, Superintendent of Schools.

It is hard to believe we have almost reached the end of the 2021-2022 school year. As I stopped by the "Graduation Moment" event at Livingston High School yesterday, it occurred to me that we have come so far in such a positive direction. This event was born in the first year of the pandemic. Its purpose was to provide parents, in small groups with many rules and restrictions, a chance to take graduation photos and hear their child's name be called over the public address system at the stadium. We did this because two years ago, due to crowd limitations, audience members, such as family and friends, were not permitted to be present when we brought the seniors together to have them walk across the stage in a modified ceremony. With a full, traditional LHS graduation ceremony planned for next week, this year's Graduation Moment simply gave families a chance to take photos together at the stadium without the crowds and pressures of graduation day. Unlike two years ago, this year's families could be out on the field in large groups, and students could enjoy their relatives and their friends as they smiled and took pictures with no health-related restrictions. What a great reminder of what we have overcome, and what a wonderful start to a week-long celebration of the Class of 2022.

Over the past days and weeks, all of our schools have been engaging in celebratory end-of-the-year events, which is fitting because we do have so much to celebrate. As I see the year come to a close on such a positive note, I am continually reminded how far our journey has taken us.

While so much has improved, looking back on this school year, there remained many challenges. We navigated the lifting of the mask mandate, several up-ticks in the spread of Covid, and ever-changing protocols. I cannot thank our Livingston Public Schools Team enough for all of the caring, hard work, persistence, and dedication they have shown in yet another year of collectively going above and beyond the call of duty. I continue to be proud to be part of an outstanding team of educators who consistently use their talent, kindness, caring and determination to put students first, and deliver a uniquely outstanding educational experience here in Livingston. My appreciation and gratitude goes out to our students and families as well, who have been cooperative, flexible, patient, and continue to be true partners.

While life in the Livingston Public Schools will certainly quiet down a bit next Friday, our district will remain busy throughout the summer with programming, planning, and professional development. We have been working for months getting ready for our opening on September 1st, 2022. That preparation will continue. There are great things coming for next school year as well. While we do not want to wish the summer away before the summer even starts, I know that our team will be so excited to welcome everyone back when the time comes.

Finally, tomorrow schools will be closed in observance of Juneteenth. The Juneteenth holiday, which has been celebrated since 1865, is actually this Sunday June 19th, but Governor Murphy declared that it would be observed in New Jersey on the third Friday of the month of June. Juneteenth is a celebration of the end of slavery in the United States, and it is a holiday that focuses on important ideas such as freedom, justice for all, and the hope for a better future. I encourage you to research Juneteenth, and learn more about its significance. As we continue working as a district towards our district goal to "Improve the culture and community within Livingston Public Schools by enhancing inclusiveness, cultural awareness, anti-racism, and acceptance of individual differences through mandated curricular programming, extracurricular programming, and district operations." The messages of Juneteenth and the priorities set out in this goal, are directly connected to our ongoing work as a school community. I wish everyone a happy and meaningful Juneteenth.

As we continue looking ahead and moving forward, I hope all of the members of our LPS Community have a safe, healthy, relaxing, and rejuvenating summer break. We will be in touch soon. Thank you.