



STATE OF MICHIGAN
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
LANSING

GRETCHEN WHITMER
GOVERNOR

MICHAEL F. RICE, Ph.D.
STATE SUPERINTENDENT

MEMORANDUM

DATE: May 4, 2020
TO: Michigan Educators
FROM: Michael F. Rice, Ph.D., Superintendent of Public Instruction
SUBJECT: End-of-Year Rituals/Rites of Passage

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "MFR", enclosed in a hand-drawn oval.

It has been an extraordinarily difficult last two months for students and staff. Thank you for hanging in and hanging tough and continuing to support children during this profoundly challenging period.

On September 11, 2001, planes flew into the twin towers of New York City's World Trade Center. From Valley Road in Clifton, New Jersey, where I would have my first superintendency, residents could see the buildings aflame.

Much changed quickly throughout the country. Security ramped up; events were cancelled or rescheduled. We hunkered down, particularly on the East Coast. In Clifton, a rite of passage – the fifth grade safety patrol trip to Washington, D.C. – was cancelled for the first time since the 1950s. A couple of hundred adults, once children, still remember the safety patrol trip from that year: the one that never took place.

One year later, as Clifton's new superintendent, I reinstated the trip. The danger diminished, the rite of passage returned.

Knowing the importance of end-of-year rituals and rites of passage – moments of closure and completion – many of you have created or are creating alternative moments for students. Apart from being enormously inspiring, these moments are critical for children's sense of completion or accomplishment. Whether it is a moving up ceremony or an awards event or a graduation, while you may not be able to recreate an event fully, with an educator's creativity and caring for children, you can still put together a life moment for children.

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608 WEST ALLEGAN STREET • P.O. BOX 30008 • LANSING, MICHIGAN 48909
www.michigan.gov/mde • 833-633-5788

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I encourage you to reflect upon and recreate as many of these traditional rites of passage moments for children as possible in the last two months. Our children – from the U.P. to the Indiana border, from Lake Michigan to Lake Huron – will appreciate these more than you likely will ever know, and will remember them forever.

If you'd like to share a video of a heartwarming 2020 end-of-year moment, Michigan Department of Education (MDE) staff would be pleased to place a number of them on our MDE website. For consideration, please send a Facebook, Twitter, or YouTube link of your videos to Michael Flaminio at FlaminioM@michigan.gov with the subject line: "End-of-Year Moment".

Thank you for finishing strong and for encouraging our children to finish strong in the last two months.... and thank you for your enduring commitment to our children. It is an honor to serve Michigan's school children with you.

cc: Michigan Education Alliance