



Santa Barbara County Education Office

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Happy New Year to all

By Dr. Susan Salcido, Santa Barbara County Superintendent of Schools

We all celebrate the start of a new year in different ways. Some people throw big parties with noisemakers and confetti, some travel to watch the ball drop in Times Square, others celebrate by giving hugs and cheers. For some, it can also be quiet and very personal — a time of reflection for the year that has passed, remembering loved ones, pausing to appreciate all we have, no matter how much or little, and setting goals for the year that is about to begin. Regardless of how we acknowledge the beginning of a new year, it marks the start of something new and special. It is an ideal time to refresh and restart.

Dr. Joelle Hood, who works with educators, leadership teams, and entire organizations on mindfulness, team-building, and social and emotional learning, suggests we approach setting goals for the new year in a way that is connected with feelings rather than tasks. “We tend to set the usual goals and resolutions — lose ten pounds, get a better job, buy a house — but often we find that when we get those things we don’t feel any better,” she explains. “We are still searching for that certain feeling, because we’re not even sure how we want to feel.

“This year, turn that goal setting upside down,” she advises. “You can first take some time to look within and decide how you really want to feel — Bold? Creative? Connected? — and then create intentions or goals based on feeling the way you most want to feel.”

Hood adds that it would be a “wonderful world if we each lived each day in purpose and on purpose.”

In fact, this is a good time for all of us to reflect on the year that has passed and check for what has worked well and what needs more of our attention. Starting where Dr. Hood suggests — at the endpoint we hope to achieve — sounds like an effective way to shape the year’s journey. We lead such busy lives that it is often hard to make the time to have those reflections, but we all know the benefits of that process: focusing our energy in ways that encourage us to learn from our past, and look forward with renewed purpose and optimism.

Now is also the time for appreciating the best of 2018. To our educators, parents, business partners, first responders, neighbors, grandparents, extended family members, and volunteers — you

are all community treasures. For those of us who interact in our schools every day, we know how much the crossing guard, office manager, bus driver, playground supervisor, food server, counselor, and other non-classroom personnel mean to our children. You are often the first person our children see in the morning and the last person they see at the end of the day. Your smile and greeting makes all the difference. Thank you all for supporting our schools and our children.

As we take time to celebrate the new year, I send an extra thanks to all of our teachers, who are in the middle of a much-deserved holiday as they prepare to enter into the second half of the school year. This is a time for educators to recharge, refresh, and get ready for the important work that lies ahead. Teachers help shape students' identities in school, they encourage our children through meticulous planning, teaching, feedback, and support. For our teachers, we are enormously grateful.

Also, I'd like to give extra encouragement to our students. The start of 2019, half-way through the school year, is a time to take stock of what habits you might continue, modify, or even eliminate. We encourage all our students to continue those habits that have helped them in school, such as organizing work and planning ahead, and focusing on social circles that foster healthy relationships. Students, you bring us all hope for our future and we believe in you.

As Dr. Hood advises, we all could benefit from focusing on how we want to feel at the end of this coming year, and what it would take to get there. Students can consider leaning forward and resolving to make the second half of the school year even better than the first.

I thank the entire community for all you do for children throughout Santa Barbara County. I wish you the happiest of new years and all good wishes for a 2019 filled with peace and joy. Happy New Year to all.

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