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Dear Parents and Guardians,

I hope this letter finds you joyfully anticipating time with family and friends over the holiday recess. For me, the holidays symbolize a time to enjoy family, reflect on the year that was, and imagine all the good that awaits us in the new year. It is also a time to say thank you to those who have made the past year a bit more joyous and a bit easier. All of the people with whom we come in contact throughout the year are different elements of a tapestry, woven together to form the story of our lives. Around this time of the year, we often take the opportunity to strengthen the seams that hold the beautiful tapestry together through our kindness, generosity, and holiday cheer.

As I ponder the term, holiday cheer, I wonder how our world would look if we chose to spread holiday cheer during all 365 days of the year. The greatest gifts we give to one another are not the presents under a tree, but the kindness and generosity of spirit that embrace our differences and celebrate our similarities. A simple smile or hello might be all that we need to spread holiday cheer all year long. In borrowing from one of my favorite quotes, "If you see someone without a smile, give them one of yours." This is a very powerful quote that I will reference later in this letter.

Before sitting to type any letter, I always search for a source of inspiration. For this letter, my inspiration comes from the wonderful Yorktown students who joined Mrs. O'Shea and me for hot chocolate and cookies this past Saturday morning in my office. All of the ESTEAM logo designs that were submitted are hanging proudly in my office, and I invited all of the students who submitted a logo to my office to view their work. All 100 designs have found a home in my office because few things make me happier than looking up from my desk and seeing student work on the walls.

As I met with those students and their parents, I recall sitting around a large table asking our students what they asked of Santa. As each child spoke, his or her eyes lit up with excitement.

They beamed as they spoke of the gifts they hoped to receive on Christmas morning. I recall sitting in my chair, as the children spoke so eloquently and passionately, wondering how magical the world would be if we all looked at the holidays through the eyes of a child. I recall my own excitement as a child in preparing for Christmas, and I reflect on how my perspective on Christmas has evolved as I have moved through various stages of life. Subsequent to each life experience, my perspective on the holidays was broadened; ultimately bringing me further away from viewing the holidays through the eyes of a child. For a brief moment this past Saturday morning, our students brought me back to seeing the holidays through the eyes of a child. I thank them whole-heartedly for that magical experience. As they spoke of Santa, there was a sense of hope that came over them. The spirit was overwhelming, and it brought me full circle to my youth.

I wish you the clarity of perspective to see the holidays through the eyes of a child, even if only for a short while. Naturally, there are other important perspectives for us to be mindful of during the holidays. I ask that you keep the brave men and women in the armed forces who are stationed across the world, in service to our country, in your thoughts. These individuals are sacrificing holidays with their families so we may enjoy the holidays with our families. I also ask that you keep those who have lost a loved one in your thoughts, especially around this time of year. No matter how much time has passed the holidays are never quite the same, and I am certain we can all relate to that feeling on some level. Finally, I ask that you keep all of those who are less fortunate than you in your thoughts. We never know the burden that those around us are carrying. In the spirit of the quote that I referenced above, a smile may be all we need to capture the holiday spirit for them and us. I encourage you to be very generous in sharing your smile with the world.

In closing, I thank you for entrusting us to work with your amazing children each day. They are a treasure. I also thank you for your unwavering support of our schools. No words can fully articulate the depth of my appreciation for this wonderful community and for the wonderful professionals who work tirelessly to support the children of Yorktown. Yorktown is a special place, a place that I am proud to call my home, because of the amazing community that we are.

I wish you a wonderful holiday season full of love, family, and joy.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ron Hattar", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Dr. Ron Hattar