

# Letter to the Class of 2031

## A Message of Hope and Vision for the Class of 2031

Dear Incoming Dunstan Student - The Class of 2031,

Welcome to this warm, heart-felt space that is built for you to enter, learn, expand, and grow in phenomenal ways - with you and alongside you! As you conclude your years of learning in elementary school, you will find that middle school can be awe inspiring, full of choices for your academic and social development, and, hopefully, with your partnership, you learn and grow in positive directions in the next three years! Our core values are to engage, inspire, and empower. Over your years with us these concepts will evolve over learning and time together!

Here you are embraced and fully accepted by a glorious group of educators who value you for the unique being you already are and who you are becoming! Our teachers purposely create environments that encourage active engagement, curiosity, questioning, mistakes, revision, reflection and acceptance! Each day we look forward to helping you build the next iteration of yourself - through large and small changes!

Dunstan Middle School is a joyful and dynamic school that reflects the joy and changes you feel and live daily as a teenager! Our instructional goals are to meet you where you are now, but then challenge and extend your thinking and learning. Together, we strive to nurture classroom environments that inspire and engage you to extend your academic prowess - so that, before you enter high school, you understand your academic strengths and can utilize the skills you need to thrive when academic content challenges you, such as self-advocacy!

Our staff artfully weaves together social-emotional learning (SEL) with academic lessons. We want you to find yourself in both our content and community. Throughout your future life you will be a part of at least one, if not several communities. We want the social and emotional skills you learn here to serve you as you move into high school. Our staff uses these questions to steer our daily engagement with you: How can I get better each day and how am I serving my community (even in little ways) each day? We encourage you to use these questions to also frame your thinking and reflection.

Middle school is significantly different from elementary school. We offer a wide array of elective options, more levels of core content, and a variety of experiences. Additionally we advise you to engage with intracurricular options such as clubs

and/or athletic activities. Over the years of working with our students, we found that 80% of our students who are on-track academically, behaviorally, and in terms of attendance were also engaged in a school club and/or athletic activity. Please see our website for a full list of our athletic opportunities and clubs.

Additionally, we offer Advise class each morning as a starting point for you to form meaningful relationships with your teacher and peers. By design, there are few students in this class and it includes the same students throughout the year to provide a sense of belonging for you and classmates. In this class your teacher will provide weekly grade checks, time for you to travel and get help from other teachers (twice a week), SEL lessons, and time for open gym. Our Advise class is designed to provide you support and encouragement in an environment where our teachers are highly-responsive to your needs.

Dunstan is a fabulous learning environment. We look forward to helping you adapt to middle school and then to hearing your feedback and ideas about how we can make it an even better place for future learners. This is a learning school that is committed to ongoing growth! It is with great joy and belief in You and who we can become as a community, that we welcome you to Dunstan Middle School!

In partnership,

Jennifer J. Pennell, Principal