December 19, 2013

Dear Dwight Community,

December, the last month of the year, always serves as a time of tradition and reflection. What did 2013 bring? How did we respond? What did we do well? What could we have done better? 2013 was a year like no other for me: huge gifts, changes, and challenges. In one year calendar year, I was a middle school teacher, assistant principal, and the principal of Dwight. This year also brought two new members of my family: my son-in-law, Rich and my puppy, Addy. Every year, I cherish the gift of being both a mother to my four children, and an educator dedicated to the cognitive, social, and emotional well-being of all children.

Upon reflection this year, I feel both extreme happiness and uncertainty. It’s hard to communicate the joy and privilege it is to walk into classrooms and throughout our school building to interact with our community of learners. They are engaged and bubbling over with exuberance as they experiment and gain new knowledge. In the computer lab, first graders create learning maps related to non-fiction reading, fifth graders draw and label their brains, and third graders travel through North America as displaced Native Americans trying to adapt to a new land. As I rush through the hallways en route to meetings, I hear, “Mrs. Maniscalco, Mrs. Maniscalco!” I stop and ask, “Yes?” “I love you!” is the response. Cards, notes, and quips come to me each day from my young clients that keep me focused on what our mission is: supporting and facilitating the best possible environment in which our children can grow and learn.

Uncertainty enters the process of reflection when I look at our innocent children and realize how vulnerable they are and what an awesome responsibility we have to ensure their childhood and their future. How can we build a kinder, safer, and more secure world for our children? How can we preserve their childhoods in a world that is so fast moving? How can we prepare them to build a peaceful and productive society? This December was a painful reminder of students we lost and of the gifts that they would have brought to our world.

December’s month of celebrations also serves as a reminder to focus on what binds us rather than what separates us. Whether we are lighting our menorahs for Hanukkah, our Kinaras for Kwanzaa, our crown of candles for St. Lucia, or our trees for Christmas, we are creating sparkling, hopeful light. As we say goodbye to 2013, let’s follow our lighted path to a bright and hopeful world for all of our children.

Respectfully,



Mimi Maniscalco