

# FAIRFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

## 501 Kings Highway East

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####  Principal -FWMS Principal –TMS Principal-RLMS

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January 30, 2019

Dear Middle School Parents and Guardians,

We hope this letter finds you well. After much consideration and discussion with our school faculties, we have decided to remove the annual 8th grade awards assembly from the calendar of events. There are a number of reasons for this decision.

Two major goals of the middle school program are to help students discover their unique gifts and talents and to develop intrinsic motivation through the learning process. While highlighting the accomplishments of students in an annual assembly has been a welcome past practice in our middle schools, we find it communicates a message of ability, rather than one of a growth mindset. As you know, we are always striving to build a culture of inclusion, and one that supports the achievements and accomplishments of all our students. Yet, we feel that extrinsic recognition of a select group of students, in a high profile, public assembly undermines our goals and goes against our middle school philosophy. We recognize the pressures our students put on themselves, especially those associated with being recognized and validated by their peers. Turning our attention to finding ways to lower this intensity, while increasing healthy learning experiences in an environment where all students can be successful, is a priority for us.

Learning is a reward in and of itself and, as our middle schoolers approach adulthood, it is our desire to create a school environment that helps all students appreciate the value in learning intrinsically and on its own merit without the need of an extrinsic award.  That is not to say that we should not celebrate excellence in all areas of our school program, or that students should not be recognized for wonderful achievements. We believe we can recognize students on a day-to-day basis, in our classrooms, and in our schools, without having a high-stakes, public awards assembly that excludes a majority of 8th grade students.  We will continue to participate in the traditional districtwide and statewide awards and we are considering a few community-based awards to be given at our graduation ceremonies.

Our school faculties are committed to encouraging all students to bring their personal best to school each day and recognizing the efforts of all students as they grow and develop towards high school.  We thank you in advance for your support and understanding and look forward to working with all of you on behalf of your children.

Thank you,

Dr. Rosato, Ms. Tiley and Mr. Formato