

Dear IUSD Families,

As we prepare to bring this unprecedented school year to a close, I wanted to reach out to you and share some important information. We understand that questions about what school will look like for the 2020-21 school year are top of mind for many of you. Please know that my team and I continue to meet and engage in discussions with state and local officials, expert agencies and other school districts daily. I will have more information to share with you early next week about our planning. Thank you for your partnership and understanding as we work through this evolving and complex public health crisis.

In the meantime, as part of our efforts to connect our students and families with supports, resources and helpful tools, I am excited to share with you that IUSD has partnered with Shawn Achor, bestselling author of *The Happiness Advantage*, speaker and renowned expert in the field of positive psychology, who taught at Harvard, to launch Optimistic Household. This a series of six interactive modules designed only for IUSD families to foster learning and social emotional wellbeing at the highest levels for our students. The first Optimistic Household module is available starting today, with new modules delivered every two weeks through early August. For more information, schedules and to access modules on demand, once they have been released, visit iusd.org/OptimisticHousehold.

As our partners, you and your children have undoubtedly heard our teachers, staff and leadership talk and communicate about [growth mindset and intellectual risk taking](#). Nearly a decade ago, IUSD embraced these principles as part of our mission to prepare students for the complex world they will enter as young adults and professionals. This includes supporting the skills students need to be college and career ready, as well as engaged citizens. Skills that will help them become resilient and resourceful learners, who are able to adapt and demonstrate grit as they face academic and other challenges.

We recognized early on that to support these capacities in our students we also needed to develop them in our leadership, teachers and staff. As a result, IUSD has focused on developing growth mindset and intellectual risk taking at all levels of our District. **The neuroscience and data behind these principles reaffirms that students, who possess hope and optimism and embrace mistakes as part of the learning process, can become adaptable learners and succeed at higher levels both academically and personally.**

Building these essential capacities in our students also begins with our families, who are our critical partners in education. While the COVID-19 crisis is not the reason why we are launching this new opportunity, it does underscore the urgency and need. As you have taken on new roles in the past few months, including that of teacher, we know you are dedicating even more focus, energy, care and time into supporting your children and their education. By making these modules available, we can support you in building and reinforcing the

same positive messages that foster growth mindsets and intellectual risk taking, while hopefully benefiting your family.

While teaching at Harvard, Shawn spent more than a decade researching the implications of positive psychology with the understanding that if individuals can utilize these principles and put them into practice they can optimize mental health and wellness, performance at all levels, and increase hope, confidence and rational optimism. These tools and skills, firmly grounded in research-based neuroscience, are critical in supporting success and the pursuit of happiness, which we all want for our children.

Please take a moment to watch a short video message from me about the unique importance of this first-ever partnership for K-12 school districts and the benefits we believe it can offer our students and families.



On behalf of the IUSD Board of Education and District leadership, we hope you and your family will avail yourselves of this tremendous resource designed only for IUSD families. Together, we can support our children's academic goals and social emotional wellbeing as they build bright futures.

Sincerely,

Terry L. Walker
Superintendent of Schools
Irvine Unified School District