



During the previous school year I, along with 11 others, raised one hundred and thirty thousand dollars to build a primary school in rural Ethiopia. At Convocation I spoke of how this was a life changing experience for me. In no small part because I witnessed how the village of Filangia is a community we could, and should emulate. They make a real effort to help each other, to look out for each other and to figure out the best way to support each other. And I want us to do the same.

This past week I have seen us strive towards this. At every site I watched us work together in spite of the huge challenges, especially at those schools under construction. At some sites, teachers and cleaning staff were unable to access their rooms until the Sunday before the first day of school.

Despite this hardship, you pulled together and helped each other. Many of you worked nights and over the weekend to make sure your class was ready, or helped others if your class was finished. It was also a joy to see retired teachers and parents pitch in and tackle the enormous amount of extra work required to get ready for this year.

Faculties Management put immense pressure on contractors to do what they promised and they did, bringing in additional work staff. Cleaning crews and our own custodians worked overtime at top speed to insure students would be able to enter classrooms safely on their first day.

Please take a moment this week to thank your custodial staff for their hard work and BRAVO to everyone for this heroic effort.

While I appreciate starting the school year strong, I am going to ask you to do more - to remember this feeling of community throughout the school and remember that we are ALL in this together. While I trust our intent is good, I believe we can do better. I ask you to reach out in friendship or support to someone new. To be mindful of the struggle many of our students and co-workers face. So often we often feel under valued and under appreciated but we forget to recognize the value of others. We forget to say thank you and hesitant to give praise.

So I thank you. You are an essential part of student success.

Have an inspiring year.

Sarah Braff
President, Santa Monica-Malibu Classroom Teachers Association