



# PALO ALTO SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL

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Kimberly Diorio  
*Principal*

March 9, 2018

Dear Paly Staff,

After eleven wonderful years at Paly, I've decided that it's time for me to take the next step in my career. Therefore, I've notified Interim Superintendent Hendricks that I plan to leave Paly at the end of this school year. The decision wasn't an easy one, especially given the thought of no longer seeing and working with all of you on a daily basis. Frankly, it's not one I seriously considered before the start of the new year.

This last decade has been the most personally and professionally rewarding time of my life. And a large part of this is thanks to you. In my 20 years as a counselor, coach, educator and administrator, I've never worked with a more dedicated, caring, resilient and thoughtful group of people. The Paly community is in a great place (both academically and emotionally), thanks to all of your hard work, your care and your commitment to our students. Attached is the note I plan on sending students and parents later this morning.

I couldn't be prouder of the things you've accomplished as a team. And I hope you are proud as well. Since we spend so much of our work day deep in the details, it's important to take time to reflect on the bigger picture and celebrate our accomplishments. That said, take a minute to consider all the work you've done over the last few years to support the Board of Education's three focused goals (much of which was mentioned in the recent [WASC Mid-Cycle Visiting Committee's report](#)).

**Wellness & Safety** - Together, we helped improve student quality of life by:

- Ending streaking
- Revising the bell schedule (Board vote pending)
- Opening the **Wellness Center**, streamlining the process for getting counseling support
- Raising awareness, decreasing the stigma and expanding mental health services and support while implementing comprehensive **suicide prevention efforts**
- Revising emergency and safety procedures, while developing expertise among our highly functioning and supportive **Crisis Response Team**
- Creating a **culture of care** - focused on wellness, mindfulness and social-emotional learning

**Equity & Access** - Together, we worked to provide every student with the best possible education by:

- Launching [Rise Together Education](#), the Paly foundation serving high-achieving, low-income students planning on attending college, by offering financial support and mentorships
- Ensuring that every student, regardless of income, now has their own computer
- Opening access to course offerings, such as in English and the successful co-teaching of all Algebra 1 classes
- Launching and expanding our [AVID system](#), so under-served or otherwise first-generation college students have additional support to reach their dream of a four-year college education (with our first cohort of ~30 students graduating this year!)
- Creating successful **co-teaching** partnerships that have resulted in a more **inclusive** educational setting, while offering a full continuum of special education services on campus

- Building a dedicated [Rtl/MTSS Equity team](#) focused on systemic and early interventions for our struggling students

**High Quality Teaching & Learning:** Together, we worked to improve the quality of instruction by:

- Creating a culture of collaboration via the formation of our [Professional Learning Communities](#), where you consistently come together to share best practices and discuss student learning data
- Improving **Course Alignment** - we've made great progress on Board Goal #6 through the development of common course guides, identification of essential learning standards, implementation of common formative assessments, creation of common summative assessments, reflection of grading practices and district homework policy
- Dedicating hundreds of hours a year towards personalized **professional learning** and sharing best practices through monthly **Learning Strands**
- Increasing the number of opportunities for self-directed learning through **innovative programs**, such as AAR, Social Justice Pathway, the expansion of 9th grade TEAM, Media Arts, Performing Arts and the Learning Design Team.

So, what's next for me? That's a good question. ☺ I'm currently weighing a number of options, and plan to make a decision in the coming months. But for now, I'm making my health a priority, spending some [quality time with Katie and Janie](#) before they develop lives of their own, and I'm eager to have more time to wrap-up my dissertation.

Yet as excited as I am to embark on my next adventure, I'm sad to be leaving such an extraordinary school, and such excellent faculty and staff. Thank you for all your love and support, for your warmth and kindness, and for all that you have taught me over this last decade. As you know, you have been a second family and Paly has been my beloved home, for which I'm truly grateful.

All this said, I won't be leaving for a few months, and I look forward to seeing you this spring as we wrap up the school year. *Once a Viking, always a Viking...*

With gratitude,



Kim



**Kim Diorio** ▶ Palo Alto High School

Dear Vikings,

After eleven wonderful years at Paly, I've decided that it's time for me to take the next step in my career. Therefore, I've notified Interim Superintendent Hendricks and the Paly staff that I plan to leave Paly at the end of this school year. Attached is the note I sent to staff this morning.

The decision wasn't an easy one, especially given the thought of no longer seeing our students on a daily basis. Frankly, it's not one I seriously considered before the start of the new year.

As I've often said, our students are and will continue to be our school's greatest asset. Over the past decade, not a day has gone by when I haven't found myself blown away by their kindness, compassion, curiosity, creativity, talent and/or intellect. I've learned so much from our amazing students, and it has made me a better person. Here are just some of the things our students have taught me:

- **Be Kind** - Everyone has a story, so please don't judge. We all wear a mask at times, therefore, it's important to always treat others the way you wish to be treated. Choose kind.
- **Take Care** - Self-care is a good thing. Remember to sleep, exercise, connect with others, eat healthy, and give yourself permission to be human. Cherish play time, down time and family time. Love yourself and treat yourself well. You deserve it!
- **Have Fun** - Surround yourself with people who make you laugh. Humor is good for the soul, and don't take yourself too seriously.
- **Speak Up** - Always do what's right, even if it's not popular. See something, say something. If you are worried about someone, let others know. Your voice matters.
- **Keep Learning** - Your education doesn't stop at the end of the school day. You are not your GPA. Find a big problem that intrigues you, and set out to solve it. You can do it.

Our school has so much to be proud of, thanks to all of you. It's always been my goal that everyone at Paly feels **capable, connected** and know that they **count**. In that spirit, I ask that you continue to believe in yourself. Talk with our staff. Share your feedback, input and ideas. In short, keep working to make Paly a better place. But most importantly, keep looking out and caring for one another.

Parents, thank you for sharing your children with us. And thank you for your continued partnership and support. It's been an incredible privilege watching your children grow up over the years. They give me so much hope for our future.

I wish you all the best, and I look forward to returning later this spring to wrap up the school year. It's great to be a Viking!

Kim Diorio