

BRIGHTENED FOR THE PASSAGE

I often think of the schooling years as a passage, and I am always struck by two visuals each year: the sight of Solanco kindergarteners getting off the bus on the first day of school and the sight of Solanco seniors receiving their diplomas at graduation.

What happens between those two events is, well, a passage, a journey.

When kindergarteners arrive the first day of school, some are wearing nametags around their necks that say who they are and where they are going. This helps us point them in the right direction, make sure they are on the right path, and ensure they arrive at a safe destination. They are both nervous and excited. It really is a striking thing to see—the students have so much energy and anticipation, and it is such an important moment. There is so much in front of them—their potential and future possibilities are enormous, as is our hopes for them.

Fast forward to graduation, where students receive their diplomas as they walk across the stage. They receive their diploma sleeves, shake hands, and pose for a picture to capture the moment. Much like their kindergarten nametags students wore years ago, their diplomas say who they are and where they are going in a different sense. Again, in a way, we help point them in the right direction, make sure they are on the right path, and ensure they arrive at a safe destination that night.

What happens between these two moments?

A lot. A lot of growth, development, failures, successes, low moments, high moments. And then they emerge.

I am reminded of a line from poet A.R. Ammons, who wrote about going “away to return, brightened for the passage.” The idea of “brightened for the passage” is educative and creates an important visual about what we attempt to do every day. “Brightened” implies greatness, cheerfulness, being ignited, and radiating. The “passage,” the years between kindergarten and 12th grade, are such important years, and we work hard to ensure they are truly “brightened for the passage.”

We are very purposeful in our use of the word “inspired” at Solanco. We want each child to be inspired, and our focus is on creating the environment where this will happen. We truly seek to “brighten,” and it is this hopeful metaphor that guides us.

At the Solanco School District, we are consistently humbled by the importance and enormity of the trust you place in us every day. This humbleness keeps us grounded, keeps us focused, and ensures we recognize what a gift and what a responsibility this is. It is a challenging thing for a parent to send children to school. Their faith is met with humbleness, commitment, and compassion from us.

When Solanco students graduate, their kindergarten nametags are no longer visible and are likely long gone. Their diplomas are eventually framed and displayed, or they sit in a drawer. But students are “brightened for the passage,” the journey through which they have gone. They have emerged and are ready for another passage in their post-Solanco years. And we continue to move forward with the vision of realizing this for another generation of students.