



## Back to School in an Age of Uncertainty

**It is easier to build strong children, than to repair broken men.**

**--Frederick Douglass**

Students of Nebraska, for some of you, today marks the first day of school for the new year. For some, it will be later this week, or next. This year will be decidedly different than any other year you have known. I sent my own children back to school today. I fought back tears and pretended that the new, required additions to their outfits were normal. Watching a first grader match her mask to her outfit, excitedly running through the house to find her shoes and to grab her scooter was more than I could handle. But I did it. So did they and so will you.

The following weeks and months of uncertainty will bring emotions you may not be prepared for. Perhaps you will feel sadness or anger that your final year in school will not include the memories that those that came before will have. You may not have homecoming dances. You may not have sporting events to attend. But you have a chance you may not have imagined just months ago.

The world is ready for you. The world is ready for your minds, your ideas, your inventions. There have been few other times in the course of our nation in which the young people have been offered a chance to make an impact. Just last year it seemed all the best ideas had been thought of and all the possible businesses had been created. But crisis has brought opportunity.

You are now facing a country that is prepared to support small, local businesses. You have a community that is ready to listen to new ideas regarding legislation. You now have a

nation that is prepared for folks just like you to come forward and find a way out of these troubled times. Your ideas and your talents will energize Nebraska, and America as a whole. Whether you write code, repair small engines, install plumbing or electrical systems; whether you draft legislation, practice law, or heal the sick, your community needs you and supports you.

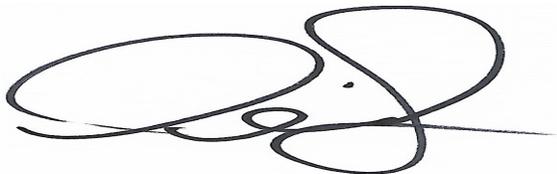
Your year may be difficult, and you may feel like you are at the end of your rope, but we will get through it. You will rise to the top and you will be remembered. You will be great, if you only allow that of yourself. I will give you the same advice I give my own children:

*Happy back to school day, kids. Your parents love you, all three of us. Make the most of your year and start blazing your trail. Learn to stand up for what is right. Plan for greatness and then work each day to achieve it. See the roadblocks for what they are and move them out of the way. Push ahead, but remember where you came from. Being on time is being late. We aren't embarrassed by your mistakes. You shouldn't be either. Keep moving. Don't waste a moment. But be mindful of what each moment means. Don't be afraid to sit down next to a steam. To hear the sounds of the world around you. Don't be afraid to ask questions or to seek answers. Don't be so focused on the road ahead that you miss that face that needs a smile or that hand that needs a shake or that voice that needs an ear. Always be prepared for a rumble. But be more prepared for peace. Give back what you use, from a friend or from the earth. And leave things and people a little better off than you found them. We love you. Be good, behave, be strong, be YOU.*

So, welcome back to school, kids. Keep your heads up and prepare for great things. Show the nation how Nebraskans plow through tough times. We, your parents and teachers, your neighbors, and peers, stand with you, support you, and commend your courage.

Most Sincerely,

Dennis Grace

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Dennis Grace', with a long horizontal line extending to the right from the bottom of the signature.