



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

December 17, 2020

Dear Friends,

With the holiday season quickly approaching, it is not uncommon for us to reflect on the year's events. Undeniably, 2020 has been one of the most challenging and difficult years of our careers. However, what helped us not only get through the year, but also grow as individuals and professionals was the *compassion, communication, and collaboration* of our TAPT members and colleagues. From the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, we have worked together, shared ideas, and offered support to ensure that everyone was making the best efforts to keep their students and employees safe and healthy as they traveled on school buses each and every day.



For the past several months, we have been attending countless webinars and optimistically serving as panelists to share our best ideas and healthy practices. Chapters hosted online meetings to continue the networking aspect that we all need and find so valuable. Six months ago – which at times feels like an eternity and other times feels like yesterday – we were able to stream an online awards ceremony to celebrate our employee award winners and TAPT honorees. Although the design and execution of this beloved event was different than what we are all used to, we were still able to capture and share the feel-good moments and stories of hard work of our dedicated and passionate members. For that, I'm grateful.

As we close the chapter on 2020 and move into 2021, there are many things to be positive about and look forward to. The TAPT Executive Committee will be meeting in January to continue plans for our 2021 Annual State Conference in The Woodlands, Texas. I am looking forward to finalizing the conference details and sharing them with you all soon, as I know you are ready for some normalcy and can't wait for the opportunity to see your beloved colleagues and amazing vendors who support us greatly, including throughout the pandemic.

Finally, I am encouraged with the recent news of a COVID-19 vaccine, as we have already seen vaccinations being administered amongst our healthcare professionals. Although the vaccine is not available for the general public just yet, I firmly believe that our school bus drivers, attendants, technicians and school district staff are front-line essential workers, and should be at the top of the list to receive the vaccine. I have personally written Governor Greg Abbott and requested that the transportation employees of the state's school districts be considered for an early phase of the vaccine. The letter is available for your review on our TAPT website.

You and your teams have certainly made a difference in the lives of our students, parents, employees and community members this year. I could not be prouder or more honored to lead this great organization and to be a colleague of the many heroes who work the front-line in student transportation to ensure all students were provided a safe and healthy service and experience every day.

Thank you for your continued compassion, courage, bravery and persistence as 2020 comes to an end, and we welcome new opportunities in 2021. I wish everyone a safe, happy and healthy holiday season.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kayne M. Smith". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'K' and 'S'.

Kayne M. Smith, Ed.D.

TAPT President, 2020-2021