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Dear Utah Educator:

Congratulations and welcome to the teaching profession! Please accept the warmest of greetings and the highest regards from your Utah Education Association! Whether this is your first year teaching or you are embarking on a new adventure as an experienced educator, you come to this work because you believe in the promise of our students and public education. The Utah Education Association is here to support you in your new career. As a member of the UEA, you join with thousands of professional educators across our state in uniting for our students and the strong public schools they deserve.

Teachers, parents and students face more challenges and opportunities at this ‘back-to-school’ time than any in our lifetimes. Uncertainties abound. Student needs are great. The Black, Indigenous, People of Color in our schools, communities and among our colleagues deserve solidarity. Will the economy rebound? What does this all mean for school funding and its impacts on the classroom? What will this school year look like for teachers and students? We have more questions than answers.

I can tell you with certainty, belonging to the Utah Education Association assures your voice in these uncertain times. At all stages in the COVID-19 pandemic we have advocated for student and educator safety, equity, funding and resources – all so we can open our schools safely and get back to learning together. The UEA has been, and will be, at the table with policymakers advocating for our members’ rights and safety so you can be the best possible teacher, counselor, nurse, librarian, psychologist, educator for your students.

Last spring, I visited with my math teacher neighbor just as she had returned from the very stressful activity of grocery shopping. As we talked (at least 6 feet away), she shared that there were fifteen students on her 8th grade math team that had just ‘gone dark.’ Fifteen. While her face was behind a mask, tears of worry filled her exhausted eyes. We are in this profession because we care deeply about our students. They are going to need us more than ever this fall. The UEA is here to support you in supporting your students.

Thank you for your decision to join the teaching profession. This school year is already one for the books!

Heidi Matthews, M.Ed.
UEA President