



## Personal Reflections

10/6/2020

Dear IMSA Community,

After six years at IMSA as President, I will be retiring from full-time employment at the end of this academic year to pursue personal interests. I know that this might come as a shock as we have so many great future plans and much work ahead of us as an IMSA community and family. I want to share my thought process because IMSA has been a great opportunity for me to contribute and because I value the relationships that I have formed over the years.

Many of you know my story. I was born and raised in a very poor section of Puerto Rico, La Playita in Santurce. My parents divorced when I was only six months old. I was raised up by a single mother who was helped along the way by my grandparents and many of her siblings. By the time I reached the 6th grade, I had attended seven schools. I worked my way through my entire college years. In a very real sense, I have been in the workforce since I was 17 years old—this year marks my 43rd year working for a living.

Prior to joining IMSA, I served for over six years as the Superintendent of Elgin School District U-46, the largest district in Illinois after Chicago Public Schools (CPS) with 40,000 students in 53 schools and 5,000 employees. Before Elgin, I served as a CPS Regional Superintendent (Area Instructional Officer) overseeing 14,000 students in 25 schools on the Southside (Englewood and surrounding communities). I have served school districts in Maryland and California as the superintendent or associate/assistant superintendent level for over 20 years.

In the spring of 2018, my wife and I paid off the mortgage on our home; the American Dream, no? This financial freedom led us to ask how much longer I wanted to remain working full-time. While I love my full-time work at IMSA, I realize that I want to have more flexibility to pursue other interests and passions. I want to engage in writing and publishing. And, I plan to involve myself in humanitarian and advocacy work, such as racial justice and advocating for children detained and held in jail-like border facilities by the Department of Homeland Security. I also have to be realistic about how much time I have left in my life. Thank God, I am presently healthy. Yet, how many good years do I have left? Twenty? Thirty? While my mom will turn 82 this year, my dad passed away in 1999 when he was only 63 years old. None of us have a guarantee of long life, nor good health.



Personal Reflections

10/6/2020

have a guarantee of long life, nor good health.

I provided advanced notice to the Board of Trustees in 2018 to allow them adequate time to organize appropriately in order to seek a new leader for IMSA. My last official day as President of IMSA will be May 31, 2021. I am truly grateful for the opportunity to be challenged and to contribute to IMSA's history and future.

In my final year, I will focus on moving our Academy priorities forward and leaving IMSA in the best position possible for a new leader. As you know, our Academy priorities for this year are the 1) Equity and Excellence Plan: Year One of Action; and 2) Beyond Surviving. Resolved to Thrive (IMSA employees working remotely must do more than merely survive the year; we want to thrive!).

There's lots still to do.

Respectfully,

—

**José M. Torres, Ph.D.**

*President*

[jtorres@imsa.edu](mailto:jtorres@imsa.edu)



Personal Reflections  
10/6/2020