

## MLK Assembly

Today we are here to celebrate the legacy of Martin Luther King Jr. There are many aspects to his legacy, and one in particular we will explore is the influence of the media on activism to promote civil rights and enact change. The newspaper and television were prominent forms of media in the 1960s, controlled by just a few sources, and now we have many more forms of communication, represented by voices of many, thanks to the advancement of technology and personalized platforms nearly 60 years later. What's different now is that you can be an activist to promote positive change just at your fingertips...and through your hard work and determination.

Dr. King fought for equality and will be remembered by his activism to enact change so that everyone could have a chance to prosper. In his *I Have a Dream* speech, he asked for: "A dream of equality of opportunity, of privilege and property widely distributed; a dream of a land where men will not take necessities from the many to give luxuries to the few."

Now place this statement in the context of IMSA. For some of you, IMSA is a place where you have been given opportunities to explore topics and approaches to learning that wouldn't be available to you in your local hometown. As an institution with math and science in the title, we also acknowledge the importance of advancing diversity in the STEM workforce, where Black and LatinX Americans are significantly underrepresented. As an Academy that values diversity, our dedication is to propel you to tackle these subjects in deep, challenging and meaningful ways so that you can effect change in STEM careers. In the process, we have to be committed to equity and excellence. For me, this means recognizing students who come from different backgrounds have different needs, and thus we provide different supports so that all students can tackle significant projects and challenges at IMSA. All of you have potential to do amazing work and earn an IMSA diploma.

Dr. King's remarks may also suggest that IMSA should find ways to influence beyond 1500 Sullivan Road. Why should such a unique educational experience be available to only 650 students in the state in any given year? In that regard, with such privilege, we carry great

responsibility to share our passion and to support further interest in STEM fields. I applaud IMSA Allies who are helping in educational programming to younger students. I applaud those of you who share your work on websites, social media, the IMSA digital commons, professional journals and conferences. I applaud those of you who give back in your local communities through your service. Why not be a mentor and role model to younger students in your hometowns or with similar identity so they, too, feel inspired about future opportunities. Those are efforts worth making and stories worth sharing.

In closing, I thank you for your commitment to your studies – to believe in yourself amidst challenges and turn them to growth opportunities. Also, I thank you for your commitment to service – to make IMSA more accessible through sharing your work, sharing your messages to enact positive change, and sharing your passion with others. Take your hard work, and find ways to spread that influence through your action. Thank you.