

## **Superintendent's Monthly Message**

### **September 2013**

We have been in school for a full month and I appreciate all that you have done to help your students adjust to being back in school. I also appreciate all of your hard work, diligence, and patience during this time of transition. As part of this transition, we must now look forward to the work that is ahead of us as we prepare our students to succeed with the new Common Core State Standards and the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning Skills.

Our role as educators (classified and certificated) has extended our responsibility to include not only the traditional “3 R’s-reading, writing, and arithmetic- but the additional skills our students will need for occupations that do not yet exist and futures that have not yet been defined. Each one of you plays an important role in the exciting challenge of preparing our students to compete in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century by providing high quality instruction that is academically rigorous and relevant to real-world situations. As a District, we must focus all of our efforts and resources in supporting high quality instruction in the classroom, as well as the extended learning environment. To this end, we will need to invest our time, energies, and resources in implementing the following educational reform efforts so that as a team we can provide the best educational opportunities to all of our students:

- High Quality Instruction-At-Scale
- Integration of the Common Core State Standards and Assessments
- Integration of the Framework for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning
- Development of Professional Learning Communities (PLC)

#### **High Quality Instruction-At-Scale**

High quality instruction-at-scale, involves the systemic improvement efforts to the instructional core within individual classrooms and across all schools, which can be applied to all levels of practice. These efforts are needed to systematically improve instruction and increased learning for all students by moving the teaching and learning from a single classroom to the school, and from a single school to the district. By identifying and cultivating high quality instruction-at-scale, we will build individual and collective capacity to:

- Understand what kind of teaching and learning is happening in each classroom, at each school across the district.
- Build a shared language and understanding of high quality teaching and learning.
- Ensure that all students have access to high quality teaching and learning, no matter which classroom they are in.

#### **Integration of the Common Core State Standards and Assessments**

The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) are the culmination of an extended, broad-based effort to help ensure that all students are college and career ready. The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) set requirements not only for mathematics and English language arts (ELA) but also for literacy in history/social studies, science, and technical subjects. Just as students must learn to read, write, speak, listen, and use language effectively in a variety of content areas, so too must the Standards specify the literacy skills and understandings required for college and career readiness in multiple disciplines.

As a District, we have fallen far behind in the three-year roll-out plan of the Common Core. And as such, we now only have this year to prepare for full implementation. Many of you have already participated in introductory trainings, and I hope that these have been beneficial. By the time we are done with the training, all teachers will have had seven days of Common Core training. We must now make the Common Core an integral

part of our every day conversations of we expect to be ready for full implementation.

### **Integration of the Framework for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning**

The Framework for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning, which has been adopted by the State of California, describes the skills, knowledge and expertise students must master to succeed in work and life; it is a blend of content knowledge, specific skills, expertise and literacies. Every 21<sup>st</sup> century skills implementation requires the development of core academic subject knowledge and understanding among all students. Those who can think critically and communicate effectively must build on a base of core academic subject knowledge. Within the context of core knowledge instruction, students must also learn the essential skills for success in today's world, such as critical thinking, problem solving, communication and collaboration.

- Core Subjects and 21<sup>st</sup> Century Themes
- Learning and Innovation Skills
- Information, Media and Technology Skills
- Life and Career Skills

### **Development of Professional Learning Communities (PLC)**

Critical to the success of any organization in ensuring that all students learn at high levels is the ability to effectively collaborate toward some defined end. By aligning the various educational reform efforts, initiatives, and mandated activities, the District will through the Professional Learning Community (PLC) model ensure a focus on learning, building a collaborative culture, and establishing a results orientation. The Professional Learning Community (PLC) model is based on the work of Clay, Dufour, Dufor, Eaker, Karhanek, Many, Soldwedel, and others, and the discussions and activities will focus on the following four questions.

- What do we want students to learn?
- How will we know when they have learned it?
- What will we do when they have not learned it?
- What will we do when that have learned it?

As with any educational reform effort or transition, there is bound to be friction, anxiety, and concern. But if we are open to new ideas; if we wholeheartedly believe in the idea and practice of "Doing Whatever It Takes" to help our students achieve at the highest levels; if we are committed to a "Culture of Excellence"; if we have a passion for teaching and working with children; if we are provided with adequate and appropriate resources to teach and support all children; if we have access to appropriate professional development opportunities; and if we have adequate opportunities to collaborate vertically, horizontally and across functional areas all of the friction, anxiety, and concerns will disappear and we will all be successful.

Sincerely,

Dr. Matthew W. Ross  
Superintendent