

## Superintendent's Monthly Message February 2014

While January usually signals the "countdown" to the 100th day of school, February often brings a reflection on what the remaining school days will bring, which seems appropriate given that Valentine's Day falls in the middle of this month. So how does Valentine's Day fit into this message? In 18th-century England, Valentine's Day evolved into an occasion in which people expressed their love for each other by presenting flowers, chocolates, and sending greeting cards (known as "*valentines*"). These expressions of romantic love are a reflection of their past as well as their future happiness together and are analogous to our reflection on and celebration of our accomplishments, friendships, and other memorable events, all while looking forward to what the rest of the year may bring. Although this is not a romantic love, it is nevertheless a love for all mankind; a love for our students, parents, community, and colleagues. I remember when I was in elementary school we used to decorate shoe boxes for Valentine's Day and every student would put cards in each other's decorated boxes, not to symbolize romantic love, but to signify a reflection on our friendship and general love for each other as having been created as social beings. So indulge me as I reflect on our past and look forward to the future.

As we move into the second half of the school year, our principals, faculty, and staff are continuing to excel and make positive contributions across our school community. We are also continuing to celebrate and honor our students for their talent and remarkable achievements. I am particularly excited about this year's focus on instruction. Our principals are spending time observing and analyzing instructional practices and providing feedback to every classroom teacher. Our teachers are continuing to work harder than ever to refine their instructional and student support practices in preparation for full implementation of the Common Core and 21st Century Skills.

I also want to recognize the parents who have made these achievements possible. Parental involvement makes all the difference in our students' academic and socio-emotional growth, as well as in their future college and career planning. I would like to invite every parent to regularly visit their child's schools. Parents are not only welcome, but encouraged to come into our schools, visit our classrooms, and spend some time. Your presence says that you believe in the importance of education for your child and the students enjoy seeing their parents in the school. Teachers are validated by the dialogue and involvement of parents, and the administration appreciates parental feedback. We need our parents to help us improve student attendance, student tardiness, and students' overall understanding of the importance of education.

Education is about how we bridge networks and domains. The rapidly changing work environment demands that we embrace a fresh approach to education; one that helps students navigate, interact, and engage within those networks and domains; and one that takes into account the reality that many more doors will open to our students if they have been properly prepared. As we plan for the future and prepare our students for the world they will inherit, we will need to enhance our programs and services in an effort to educate all our students. We have a great opportunity before us as we work to develop our Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP) and the Local Education Agency Plan (LEAP). These plans are currently being developed with input from the District Advisory Committee and the District English Learner Advisory Committee with input from families and community members through the LCAP/LCFF Community Forums to ensure that the District is aligning its spending and its budget priorities to the academic success of our students at all levels and to our various reform initiatives. I am sincerely grateful to all who have participated in this process. Through this process we will be able to demonstrate clearly how our dollars are being spent and prioritize our budget to support work that is happening directly in the classrooms to improve student learning. We invite everyone to join us as we proceed with the all too important process of moving our schools forward and offering an education to our students that prepares them for a bountiful future.

Sincerest Regards,

Dr. Matthew W. Ross  
Superintendent