

## **Superintendent's Monthly Message**

### **October 2013**

As we begin the month of October we will continue developing and implementing our educational reform efforts: High Quality Instruction At-Scale, Integration of Common Core State Standards, Integration of 21st Century Learning Skills, and Professional Learning Communities. All four reform efforts are designed to be mutually supportive of each other, and as such are not to be considered as separate programs. To assist with defining and implementing High Quality Instruction At-Scale with a focus on moving students along the continuum of engagement, the District has developed several instruments to assist teachers and administrators in designing highly engaging lessons, as well as for gathering data to determine progress. Beginning October 14, 2013 we will begin the formal process of observing instructional practices and reviewing lesson plans to gather data and provide feedback related to the patterns/anomalies, predictions, and next level of work as it relates to each school's identified strategies for moving students along the continuum of engagement. With regard to the Common Core State Standards rollout plan, by the end of the month all teachers will have completed the first two rounds of training provided by KCSOS. As I visit classrooms and talk to teachers and administrators I am finding an overwhelming excitement for what we are about to engage in and as a result a renewed passion for the art and science of teaching. But there is also some level of anxiety about this endeavor because we are two years behind in our planning and implementation, we are still using outdated instructional materials, and the new standards require a fundamental shift in our instructional pedagogy and expected student performance (tasks and learning targets). In support of the shift from the current state standards to the Common Core standards and the new SBAC testing protocol, the integration of 21st Century Learning Skills (P21) will provide teachers with opportunities to design lessons which will tend to promote higher levels of engagement and provide students with the skills necessary to demonstrate mastery of these standards. All three of these reform efforts will only become a reality if we have purposely planned our teacher, administrator, and paraprofessional collaboration time. We must focus our collaboration time 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 if they have not learned it? And, what will we do if they have learned it? By doing this, we will be able to better identify the gap between the identified learning targets/tasks and student performance; which will also enable us to better provide intervention and/or acceleration programs. As Aristotle noted, "the whole is greater than the sum of its parts." Together, our greatest achievements will be those that reflect a team, rather than an individual approach.

On another note, with our current focus on the several educational reform efforts it can be easy to forget about all of the support systems and personnel that make the job of educating children easier. This month, I want to focus on our school bus and van drivers, who transport and care for our students. Getting kids to and from school safely and on time makes bus and van drivers an integral part of our schools and our community. In addition, this year the National School Bus Safety Week is scheduled for October 21-25 and the theme is "Stand Back From the Yellow and Black!" Studies have proven that the most dangerous part of the school bus ride for children is when they get on and off the bus. Remember to pay close attention to school buses when you see them driving on the street and teach children how to be safe when boarding and exiting the bus. Please have this important conversation with your students, and where possible, please consider integrating this theme into your instruction. Please join me at our October Board meeting on the 21st to honor our bus and van drivers. If you cannot attend the Board meeting, then please make it a point to thank our bus and van drivers throughout the month.

Sincerely,  
Dr. Matthew W. Ross  
Superintendent