

HIGHLINE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

June 14, 2006

Memorandum

TO: All Employees
FROM: John P. Welch

John's Journal *Reflections from the Superintendent*

Dear Colleagues:

As the end of the school year seemingly rushes toward us, we're hurrying to complete all the learning our students are expected to cover this year, finish filling out that stack of report cards, and wrap-up our projects before heading out for vacation. Certainly, one of the most exciting parts of this end-of-the-year flurry is graduation. It's our chance to celebrate the successes of our students, our peers, and our district. And, whether we work in an elementary, middle, or high school - or somewhere behind the scenes - we all play a vital role in preparing each and every student for that important day.

This year, across the district, we have two Washington Scholars, four WAVE scholarship winners, a National Merit Scholar, and a National Merit Finalist. We also have many fine young people who are doing amazing volunteer work in their communities. This is a testament to your work with our students.

Our partnerships with other learning organizations have never been stronger. The district is the beneficiary of several significant initiatives that allow us to do our work - to really draw out the strengths of our students and staff. And our staff members are helping connect our students with programs that serve their needs. For example, the University of Washington offers several programs to provide on-campus summer experiences for high school juniors to further their educations and help overcome barriers to attending college. We've seized opportunities for students to participate in events like Congressman Adam Smith's Science and Math Career Fair and the job shadow program at Microsoft. This kind of exposure is invaluable - events like these can capture the imagination of a student and trigger the desire for more learning. And, it doesn't start at the high school level - the middle schools and even the elementary schools are focusing increased attention on the math and science curriculum and hosting special post-secondary education events.

It's never too early to start talking with the students about the next step and the one after that. For the nearly 1300 sixth graders who will be moving to middle school in the fall, it's important they know what to anticipate. It's a difficult transition at a difficult age - if it's seamless, the

likelihood of success rises dramatically. The same goes for the 1328 district kindergarteners who will enter first grade. You are ingraining the importance of education and being a lifelong learner.

The small learning communities are taking hold and the effects are being seen in the accomplishments and comments of the students involved. Our schools have hosted many other districts as they research this system as an option for their students.

Our community signaled their support and confidence by passing the bond on the first ballot! Again, this is a testament to the good things happening around the district.

I am really proud of the work you have all done this year. Clearly, the task of preparing every student for college, career, and citizenship is at the heart of your efforts - and the results are telling. More students than ever before are planning some form of continuing education. I look forward to continuing this work in the fall as we strive toward our goal of 9 out of 10 students going on to college or other post-secondary learning.

But, before we start talking too much about next fall, let's all take time out to celebrate this year! We've come a long way! Bask in the successes you've helped create, seek out the colleague who has really risen to the challenge this year and tell them about the difference they've made, and most of all, celebrate with the kids - especially those who have had to really stretch to reach their goals. The most meaningful lessons aren't the easy ones.

"Thank you" seems inadequate when I consider all you do - the long hours each of you spend correcting papers, supervising events, and meeting with parents. But, please know, I so appreciate all you do - for the kids, the parents, the community. You truly are making a difference, one student at a time! Thank you!

Have a great summer!