

HIGHLINE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

September 26, 2006

Memorandum

TO: All Employees
FROM: John P. Welch

John's Journal *Reflections from the Superintendent*

Dear Colleagues:

As we move into the fourth week of school, I want to welcome back everyone to what I believe will be an awesome year. I have so much respect for you and the incredible work you do every day with our students and community. I am excited by what we can achieve together for students.

We talk a lot about "success" for our students and our schools. I want to share with you what "success" means to me. When I visualize success for Highline Public Schools, I see students prepared for college, career, and citizenship. I see young people who can think analytically, solve problems, form opinions, conduct research, use new and emerging technologies, and work peacefully and productively with people from many cultures. I envision all students reaching high expectations, mastering the competencies that have been set before them at each grade level. I see *every* student leaving high school with a sense of confidence that only some exhibit today, ready to take on the world.

My vision of success extends to our staff. I see Highline as a professional learning community constantly searching for new answers and opportunities to address a growing set of challenges. I see school leaders with clear visions for their schools and high expectations for all students and staff, and I see administrators, teachers, and staff across the district continuing to learn and build our capacity so that we are able to help our students reach new heights.

In my vision of success, our district office is motivated by respect and urgency in service to schools, and we are learning how to provide that service in the most effective manner. The people who work in our district office demonstrate that we are all in this together and work hard to understand the needs of our schools-- and therefore our students.

My vision includes a community that has high expectations for all of its students and each of us. I envision multiple partnerships assisting us as we strive to improve student achievement.

As I share my images for our future, some may call it "pie in the sky." I call it "wild hope for all children." After one year as superintendent, I see some things more clearly—and one of those things is the reality in which we are working. But that hasn't dampened my "wild hope." Yes, we must approach our work realistically, but we can do that and still remain committed to the vision of a better future. We will approach our challenges in a systemic way: ensuring that our students have every opportunity to learn, that they have access to a rigorous curriculum and multiple supports, and that we each develop our skills in order to better meet our students needs. We will employ both short- and long-term strategies.

Our work plan this year identifies math as our top priority. Currently we are working on a system-wide math plan that I will share more about next month. It is comprehensive and reaches across the system. As you hear more about it, please share with me and others your thoughts.

As I close I want to again thank each of you for all that you do. We have come a long way. We are on the right road. We can celebrate our successes, but we can't be satisfied. The fact is that as a district our math results put us in the next phase of district improvement. We have difficult work to do. However, nothing worth doing is easy. I have a great deal of confidence in you and what you can do. We can reach our goals if we keep our eyes on the vision, our feet grounded in reality, and a wild hope for all children in our hearts.