

# HIGHLINE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

November 7, 2006

## *Memorandum*

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TO: All Employees  
FROM: John P. Welch

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### John's Journal *Reflections from the Superintendent*

Dear Colleagues:

In my opening address this fall I shared with you the data for our students' performance in math. The most sobering statistic is that only 39% of Highline's 10<sup>th</sup> graders met the state standard on the math WASL. We clearly have work to do and time is of the essence.

It is becoming increasingly clear that the math skills needed for family-wage jobs (those jobs that pay enough to support a family well above the poverty level, provide benefits, and offer clear pathways for career advancement and further education and training) are identical to those needed for success in college.

One recent study shows that in today's global economy students need a higher level of knowledge and skills than ever before to succeed in the workplace. While I thought I understood this, it was eye-opening for me to see current recommendations for those students pursuing apprenticeships and journeyman-level occupations. For example, electricians need to have algebra, geometry, trigonometry, and physics. I encourage you to take a look at the study and familiarize yourself with the new requirements.

[www.act.org/path/policy/pdf/ReadinessBrief.pdf](http://www.act.org/path/policy/pdf/ReadinessBrief.pdf)

Dr. Carla Jackson, Assistant Superintendent for Teaching and Learning, has been developing a plan to improve math performance at every grade level. This plan provides a call to action and a framework for thinking about how to improve math performance in a systematic way for all students, whether they are currently struggling with math, excelling at math, or somewhere in between.

Our vision revolves around some targets, including these:

- Move 20% of students up one level on the WASL by the fall of 2007, and 20% each year thereafter until all students meet the state standard.
- Increase the number of students passing algebra no later than the 9<sup>th</sup> grade.
- Increase the number and level of math courses taken in high school (juniors and seniors need to take rigorous math courses).
- Decrease the number of students taking remedial math courses in college.

The plan has four primary components with a number of actions and strategies.

#### Math Plan Components

- System of aligned high standards, curriculum, and assessments.
- Professional development to improve instructional practice and leadership.
- Developing partnerships with parents, community organizations, and businesses that support student achievement in math.
- Raising awareness among students, parents, and community about the importance of success in higher level mathematics.

Within these components you will find actions that address recruitment and retention of math teachers, identifying and implementing formative assessments, identifying research-based interventions, increasing time spent on math, and identifying how technology can be a part of the solution, just to name a few.

While we have developed a framework for the math plan, we need the benefit of your best thinking to make it work successfully. Dr. Jackson, I, and others will be taking the math plan on the road - sharing it at school faculty meetings and with local community organizations. Your feedback and input is important. It will inform and influence our thinking and the work that lies ahead.

Part of my role in this work will be to engage the greater community in our math plan and other efforts to prepare all students for college and career. I plan to reach out to our faith-based and business communities and talk with them about how we can work together to support the children of Highline.

We are on a journey and it will take all of us working together to get the results we are after. I look forward to your feedback in the weeks and months ahead as we begin to change the current reality.