

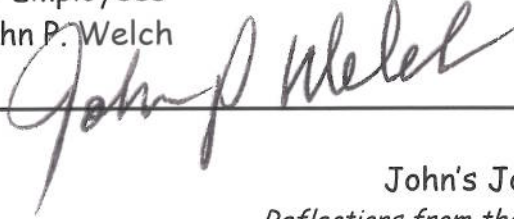
HIGHLINE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

February 26, 2009

*Memorandum*

---

TO: All Employees  
FROM: John P. Welch



---

John's Journal

*Reflections from the Superintendent*

Dear Colleagues,

As you know, our state budget deficit continues to grow deeper, and as a school system we are bracing for the impact that will have on our schools and students. We face budget cuts deeper than we have ever faced. Next year's budget will reflect a new economic reality for schools, which will be with us until the state and nation recover financially.

We are currently developing our budget for 2009-10, and I am asking for your best thinking. Each school and department will have an opportunity to provide input to me and the budget steering committee. It will take all of us working together to build a budget that maintains and protects the work that most effectively supports student achievement.

Though we face consuming financial challenges, let's not lose focus on the good work we are doing to push students academically. I want to highlight some current work in the area of math. Most of this work falls into three main areas:

Algebra: Algebra is a key focus area because it is a gateway to success in college. Algebra teachers are advancing their skill through collaboration with colleagues, specialists, and coaches. In the words of one teacher, "The Algebra work has helped me grow as a teacher; though growth is frustrating, hard, and time consuming, I feel I am seeing real gains in my Algebra students' understanding."

Quickly supporting students who fall behind in math: One of our top priorities is intervening with students who are struggling in math. Our successful literacy work helped us learn strategies that we are now applying to math instruction. Our teaching and learning team has developed six strategies for targeted math intervention, which are available to schools in one-page guides. We have pilot programs in 14 elementary and middle schools aimed at learning why students struggle in math and how to respond

effectively. Most of our middle schools and high schools have additional instructional time during the school day for students who need extra help, funded by I-728 or other sources.

Tools for teachers: As you know, last year OSPI adopted new math standards for K-8 that require significant changes in math instruction. About 50 teachers from across the district worked together to develop transition guides that provide a clear instructional roadmap reflecting both the current GLEs and the new performance standards. Next year, these transition guides will also incorporate intervention approaches, common assessments, and supplements for areas in which our current curriculum has gaps.

We are committed to dedicating resources to this math work, in spite of our budget challenges. Mastery of mathematics is critical for success in the twenty-first-century workplace. Too many of our students have far to go to reach proficiency. Improvement of instruction and student success in math is a top budget priority for next year.

Though we have challenging times ahead, I am hopeful that this time of difficulty will bring out the best in all of us, so that we may continue to move toward our vision of college, career, and citizenship readiness for every student.

In the words of Horace, "Adversity has the effect of eliciting talents which in prosperous circumstances would have lain dormant."