

Brookfield-LaGrange Park School District #95  
Superintendent's 2012-2013 Mid-Year Report

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## Superintendent Mid-Year Report, 2012-2013

### **Introduction:**

The main focus of this Mid-Year report is two-fold. It provides an update as to the progress on the goals established between the superintendent and the Board. Second, it provides a summary overview as to the financial status, instructional strength, and status of the physical plant for the district.

First, three broad goals were established between the Board and superintendent. They included:

- 1) Provide the technology vision to bring administrative efficiencies through the use of technology and to address the use of technology in curriculum and instructional practice.
- 2) Provide on going assessment, evaluation, and recommendations relative to the instructional programming of the District.
- 3) Provide on going assessment, evaluation, and recommendations relative to the operations of the district.

These goals have been purposefully formulated in a broad sense to allow the Board the opportunity to evaluate the superintendent against established goals while, at the same time, giving the superintendent the ability to have focused efforts on specific tasks or items that support those goals. While this report provides a formal update as to the activities that have taken place to reach these goals, it is noted that the ongoing process of these goals has been communicated to the Board through weekly communications, Board meetings, committee meetings, and informal dialogue. The review of these goals is included in PART ONE of this report.

Secondly, this report will serve to provide pertinent information relative to the financial status of the district, the instructional strength of the district, and the status of our physical plant. This information is reported in PART TWO of this report.

## **PART ONE:**

### **Review of Superintendent's Goals:**

The primary work that has taken place to accomplish the three goals is detailed in the following report. Although key work has been indentified that supports each goal, it is important to remember that this work is not inclusive of everything done to support that goal. Indeed the day-to-day operations also support the goals.

**Goal One:** Provide the technology vision to bring administrative efficiencies through the use of technology and to address the use of technology in curriculum and instructional practice.

This goal encompasses two aspects of technology: administrative efficiencies and instructional practice. In reporting out, I will segregate the two. Regardless of which aspect is being discussed, it is also important to note that some issues are related to hardware/software and others are related to infrastructure.

As it relates to creating administrative efficiencies, a couple of key aspects have moved the district forward. First, the district has enabled the use of an on-line capability to manage personnel. This system allows staff to access information relative to items commonly associated with the human resource department (i.e. payroll, sick leave, insurance, etc.). By doing so, we have eliminated the need to manually process payroll. This means we no longer print, stuff into envelopes, and deliver compensation to those staff on electronic deposit. Further, the system allows staff the opportunity to check information immediately without the need to have the business department comb through files.

A second efficiency that has been created is related to how substitutes and employee sick leave is managed. In the past, we had a "paper-pencil" method for recording subs on a daily basis as well as what staff member needed to have their leave credited. We have moved to an automated system (created internally at no cost to the district) that allows subs to sign in at each office electronically via an Ipad. This system records who was subbing in the building and for whom. The system allows us to sort data, among other things, which makes processing payroll and leave much more expedient.

Lastly, we are in the process of creating a new website that will allow us greater access and flexibility in using the tool to communicate with the community. For example, it is our intention to use this as a means to post the fliers that once crowded the students' backpack. The new website will allow us to also post information in a more timely fashion in emergency situations. To date, the district page and school pages have been designed and are running in beta. I expect we should be live by Spring Break.

In addition to using technology to create efficiencies, the district has focused efforts on improving its infrastructure to support the future classroom technology needs and desires. The focus this year has been to increase the bandwidth available to the district.

The first task was to create more connectivity between the buildings. This was accomplished by installing a point-to-point connection between the two schools. This work was completed around November. Prior to this installation the district had roughly 3 Mbps. We now have 250 Mbps capability. At the same time, I have solicited proposals to increase our fiber line from the current 10Mbps to 100Mbps. To date, we are working with ATT to get our install. I had hoped we would be already set, but work continues. It is our belief that this infrastructure work represents the last key component to allowing for greater upgrades to hit the classroom.

The work has not solely focused on creating efficiencies and giving attention to our infrastructure. The classroom has seen significant increases in technology to support instruction. First, printing was addressed in both buildings. At BP, classrooms received improved printers to replace old or non-working printers. SEG received new printers to outfit print stations. Both schools were outfitted with new printers, including color, in their respective labs.

Next, BP has received new classroom computers that were part of the deployment project of taking the inventory from the existing labs (you will remember we did full lab replacement over the last two years). SEG has seen infusion in two areas. The advance math program has integrated 8 new laptops to support guided math instruction and differentiation. Also, the administration has done an exceptional job of corralling existing laptop inventory-about 20 laptops- and establishing a process and procedure for them to be "checked-out" from the library. This has helped to allow teachers wanting to use the laptops to facilitate small group instruction within their classrooms.

Lastly, I am working with the BP 5<sup>th</sup> grade team on a recent proposal submitted for providing a classroom set of Ipads to be used between the 5 teachers. While the proposal is in the early stages, it represents the manner in which has proven effective for bringing technology into the classroom. It would be reasonable to expect that this proposal would become a reality for the next school year.

Although the above highlights how new technology is being used to enhance instruction, it is important to remember that we are using existing equipment to improve instruction. Currently our guided reading program has significant technology integration to enhance small group instruction. Further, SEG science teachers are using laptops to enhance elements of differentiation. Our special education teachers at SEG have been outfitted with laptops and Ipads to help engage struggling learners. Our reading specialists are utilizing new Ipads to progress monitor the reading improvement of the Title 1 students.

In closing Goal One, there has been significant work with technology to create administrative efficiencies and improve instruction-both in infrastructure and the infusion

of technology directly to the classroom. This should remain a goal for the superintendent.

**Goal Two:** Provide on going assessment, evaluation, and recommendations relative to the instructional programming of the District.

District 95's instructional programming remains its strength. Every aspect of the instructional programming-from special education to regular education to English language instruction- is exceptional. However, we are in a model of continuous improvement always staying at the front of the educational practice. In doing so, we evaluate instructional program in three ways: 1) evaluating changes made previously to programs to determine if we have achieved desired results 2) evaluating existing programs to determine if/how to enhance that program and 3) reviewing programs that do not yet exist in the district to determine if it is a desirable program. This year our work has focused in all three areas.

Early in the year, we reported the results pertaining to our math program. Three years ago we made a program model change to offer more tiers to our existing program with the belief that it would have a "sliding scale" effect on student performance in math. The results demonstrated that the vast majority of our students moved from "meets" expectations to "exceeds" expectations and that the number of students "not meeting" expectations decreased. The math program will continue in its current form with emphasis on using MAP data to make placements with yearly monitoring of the data.

We have also been evaluating two existing programs: Title 1 and advanced English at SEG. Title one is a little more involved in trying to understand as it encompasses both an instructional component and a management component. Title 1 is the federally funded program that supports struggling readers. We have traditionally run the program as a pullout model, meeting the needs of students when we could pull them from other academic time. We have adjusted that model to more of a push-in service model. Although in its early stages, the initial thoughts are very positive. We have been able to better maximize our staff resources and reach more students with this directed instruction. A side benefit has been the expedited use of guided reading (a desired reading instructional methodology used in all reading classes at BP). Although we feel that the program has been improved, a few concerns still remain. One is how to address the tier three students in our RTI model as well as how to address the management aspects that continue to grow with the program. In addressing these issues, it may be an opportunity to look at the role of assistant principal at BP coupled with an instructional/management role of Title one.

The evaluation of the advanced English class at SEG is at its early stages; however, there seem to be some glaring concerns. First, the placement process is suspect. It seems that the criteria for placing students floats from year to year and is more closely designed to find the top 20-25 students regardless if they have or have not met the established criteria. This draws concern for me in that we may be denying opportunities to kids that deserve to be in the course. Secondly, we are using a push-in model for a full class of advanced

students. In short, we have two English instructors to teach one class of students. In my opinion, this is not a good use of personnel resources. It would seem that we should expect our existing instructors to be able to raise instructional expectations in those sections. This is no different than how we currently run the math program. I am still in the process of gathering data, but hope to have a formal recommendation on this program to the Board in early spring.

Lastly, we have been focused on a new program concept for the District. The Board has identified foreign language for K-5 as an area of exploration. It was determined that the end result would be a program wherein all students participate in a foreign language experience (much like art or music); yet, it was known that a less extensive program (i.e. a lunch group or after school group) may be a transitional piece that occurs prior to full implementation. Programming options are still being formulated, but work has been done to evaluate neighboring district programs and review elementary schedules. Concrete ideas for a transitional program will be available in the spring. It is noted that space has been identified as a concern at BP. Any formal program addition at BP, in its current state, will require altering the existing program and/or elimination of the existing program.

Closing Goal Two, anyone associated with District 95 as a teacher, Board member, volunteer, administrator, employee should feel very proud of the accomplishments over the last several years in the area of improving instruction. Although specific areas have been highlighted in this report, the fact remains that work on instruction-staff development, teacher mentoring, teacher evaluation to name a few- all take place that support our growth. This goal should remain for the superintendent.

**Goal Three:** Provide on going assessment, evaluation, and recommendations relative to the operations of the district.

There has been work in several areas relative to the operations of the District. In some instances, we have made minor changes to improve operations and in other areas, more comprehensive changes are needed. The areas of focus over the past several months have been in the District office, staff development, buildings/grounds, and technology.

There has been focus in the District office on not only modernizing the manner in which we perform daily operations, but to cross train employees to understand the essential functions of each other's position (i.e. more than one person knowing payroll). In addition to the concepts that have been implemented relative to the use of technology (mentioned under goal one), a number of daily tasks that were manually performed in the past have been moved to an electronic format allowing for a smoother, more seamless operation of the District office. As an example, we now keep employee salary data in an electronic spreadsheet that allows us to quickly generate salary reports required by the state, allows us to more accurately forecast the next year's budget, has streamlined salary communications to staff, and allows for more accurate long-term record keeping. In

addition to improving the day-to-day operations, significant work has been done to cross train employees on the key functions of the existing positions. One way in which we have worked to facilitate the training has been to get each employee familiar with DCR (where all the important functions of the district live) and have a responsibility of his or her position tied to the system. By having each role in the office utilize the DCR, employees have become familiar with the system and how to navigate through the system. To further promote cross training, we have been working to develop a manual that provides the “how to” instructions (including screen shots and detailed step-by-step instructions) to complete necessary processes (i.e. payroll, entering an employee contract etc.). In producing this manual, we then have a separate employee use that manual to be certain that the steps actually will produce the desired result. In short, we develop the manual with the employee responsible for that function and then have a second employee use the manual in training to complete that process.

Our staff development model continues to improve and represents a significant cornerstone of our instructional success. There have been two key revisions to its operation this past year. First, we have implemented a formal new teacher mentor program. This program has provided specific training to new teachers prior to the start of the year with support and development throughout the year. Tenure staff supports the program through mentorship and formal meetings. Cathy Cannon’s work to provide model teaching that includes opportunity for reflection and feedback ensures that our new teachers are supported while, at the same time, instills the instructional vision of the district. In addition to the mentor program being implemented, the District has achieved the goal of hosting a joint institute day for the area schools. This has now grown into having a common institute day with the high school and other sending schools. While this endeavor opens doors to local learning opportunities for our staff, it also allows District 95 to utilize our significant instructional strengths to help other districts.

If there is any one area of operations that continues to positively grow at a rapid pace, it is that of building and grounds. Again, this is an area that we could develop pages of identifiable improvements from the reductions in purchased services, to the training that has elevated our current staffs professional capacities, to the detailed budget reporting that has allowed for us to determine short and long term goals. However, the immediate, larger focus has been on getting our automated system, Facility Wizard, operating. To date, our custodial staff has been trained on its use and is tracking their own work orders in the system. Additionally, the vast majority of our existing building equipment has been inventoried in the system as well as preventive maintenance schedules for said equipment being included. Teachers should be trained in March with full implementation by May.

Lastly, significant consideration has been given to the technology operations of the district. Although we have encountered-and continue to encounter- challenges with the technology operations, we should view this challenge as a good problem to be experiencing. Our challenges extend from the fact that the District has made conscious decisions to significantly upgrade technology throughout the district. There has been major work done on the infrastructure as well as the technology components added to the

District. In doing so, we have struggled to support and maintain this infusion with our personnel structure. As our technology needs continue to grow, we must be certain that our support of that technology also increases. In November, the Board was presented with a personnel model that included a director for technology and break-fix people for each building with future expansion to instructional technology coaches at each building. It is my opinion that the Board will need to address this personnel structure in order to support the technology demands we will face moving forward. At a minimum, our personnel structure should expand to include a high-level person to direct the overall technology operations of the District and one break-fix individual for the district.

In closing Goal Three, I want to remind the Board that because we continue to focus on improving our operations in different District facets does not necessarily mean that those areas are not operating well. Sometimes when there is focus on continuous improvement, we lose sight of how well the operations are working. The fact of the matter remains that our District continues to operate at a high level across the board.

### **Summary of Superintendent's Goals:**

The broad based goals have served as a solid basis to direct the work of the superintendent to improve the district in critical areas. The aforementioned represents the focus of key areas in each of the goals. I believe this alone demonstrates significant growth and improvement for the District. However, the key areas identified in this report, by itself, should not be viewed as the only work that fosters growth in the district. The day-to-day decisions and operations of the superintendent all help to support these goal areas. While the district will use this report to support its evaluation of the superintendent, it is my hope that they will also focus more holistically on these areas to determine that improvement was made as opposed to JUST viewing specific actions. In doing so, it is my opinion that the Board will see that high expectations have been exceeded.

### **Closing Recommendations:**

The work referenced above, for the most part, is completed and/or implemented. However, as we move through the end of the school year, a few items remain as outstanding work:

1. Continue to monitor the effectiveness of the Title 1 program and provide recommendations to the Board on proper staffing for the program.
2. Provide recommends relative to the advance English programming at SEG.
3. Provide recommendations relative to the program model for foreign language.
4. Provide staffing recommendations to support technology.
5. The existing superintendent goals are relevant in moving forward.



## **PART TWO:**

### **Financial Status of the District**

The 2012-2013 budget estimated \$11,847,553 in revenues and 12,272,901 in expenditures. Although our expenditures exceed our revenue, this is a result of a conscious decision to spend existing fund balance in the O/M fund to complete building improvement projects deemed critical by the buildings and grounds committee. The district's fund balance as of January 31, 2013 was \$5,408,065. This represents a 6 percent increase in total fund balance from the previous year. Based on a review of financial data, the District is operating within its means and revenues are streaming in as predicted. We have encountered no major surprises. While it is too early yet to forecast ending budget results, I am confident that we are healthy and in a good position today. A further forecast of ending fund balances, expenditures, and revenues can be done after the second collection (roughly April). A working budget for expenditures will be created by March for review.

The following represents a breakdown by fund of our percentages of revenues collected and the percent of our budget expended as of January 31, 2013:

	<u>Revenue</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Expenditure</u>	<u>%</u>
Education	4,056,514	45	4,547,822	51
O/M	579,868	43	991,698	51
Debt Service	352,473	46	570,750	78
Transportation	142,350	35	122,629	32
IMRF	136,509	40	154,760	45
Working Cash	48,623	40	0	

The superintendent and the finance committee have made progress in streamlining certain aspects of the budget as well as developing the budget earlier in the budget season. Specifying specific purchased services in the O/M budget has allowed for better monitoring of these expenditures as well as allowing for more accurate funding of these line items. This fiscal year saw the adoption of the budget about 1 month earlier than normal practice. It would be my goal to establish the draft budget as early as March with the hopes of adopting the budget at the first meeting in June. While this would serve to increase transparency in that you are starting a fiscal year with an actual approved budget, one cautionary measure is that the ability to predict expenditures becomes

reduced, as some staffing decisions coupled with insurance premiums are not determined until after July 1. How they would impact budget decisions will depend on the extent of the changes.

### **Instructional Strength of the District:**

Without hesitation, I can say that the District's greatest strength lies in its instruction. Our work to develop strong classroom instruction rooted in best practice supported by exceptional staff development and measured by formal local and state assessment has proven recipe for significant growth in our students' academic performance. All data points indicate that we remain an exceptionally strong performing district.

The board is presented, annually, the results of the ISAT tests. During this report to the board, data is disaggregated in many different ways. It is viewed through multiple lenses, conclusions are drawn, and it informs educational decisions. In short summary, the district has moved from 88%/89% of its students meeting/exceeding four years ago to 93%/95% meeting/exceeding today. Most notable in all this data is the vast increase in the number of students moving from meeting to exceeding as well as the sub group performance of our special education and English language learners.

A cornerstone of our instructional programming remains the implementation of MAP testing. Earlier this year, the Board was presented an update on how we are using MAP to inform instruction and progress monitor certain subgroups of students. We will continue to use longitudinal data to look at student growth and instruction. At the same time, we will continue to develop the staffs' capacity to access the deepest advantages of the data reporting tools embedded in the MAP program.

Without staff development, no instructional program will advance. Our work in developing opportunities for staff as well as providing daily support is second to none in the business. Our focus remains on differentiation with emphasis on small group instruction. Models such as guided reading are emerging in the classrooms and the use of technology is infused at an appropriate pace.

As we continue moving forward on the instructional work of the district, we have met and been out in front of new reforms. Our work in producing a systematic, teacher-led process for aligning the common core to our curriculum has put us out in front of districts trying to meet this challenge. Future efforts will focus on the actual assessment of the common core (roughly 2014/2015), but for now, we know our work will prepare us for those challenges. The work towards standards based reporting is just one more identifier that our district understands best practice and how to make it a reality in practice.

Moving forward, the common core and standards based reporting will be a major focus of the district. Programming models will continue to be evaluated and instruction will continue to improve.

### **Status of the physical plant:**

The district's physical plant has seen significant upgrades and repairs over the last 18 months. This work has, to a large degree, caught us up on work that may have been deferred in the past. That is not to say that we will not have future repairs or needs, but the majority of the "check-list" items are complete. The focus has shifted to understanding future needs of the district in much larger scale. These discussions have focused on life safety work coupled with how to renovate classrooms in aging buildings.

While the work has been exceptional to date, the future work of the district will become significantly more than understanding how to provide preventive maintenance and repair. Larger questions are beginning to surface relative to instructional space and our non-instructional facilities (i.e. cafeteria, gymnasium). Instructional practice is changing causing the need to evaluate if buildings designed 50-75 years ago are equipped to handle the future of education. At some point, we will be limited in our technology integration simply by design of our buildings and space. A desire to increase programming (i.e. foreign language or performance arts) currently has to hurdle the space issue. Not to mention, our population is increasing at unexpected rates. BP is up over 700 students to date. How to develop instructional and non-instructional space, either through redesign or new development, will be at the front of physical plant conversations.

As we explore answers to how to address these issues, the Board needs to know that the discussion will need to become large scale within the community. Programming will need prioritized, funding options discussed, and the future instructional landscape will need debated. This, perhaps, will need to become a large-scale project for the Board.

### **Closing Remarks:**

We have, as a board and superintendent, discussed the notion of "premier school districts". The desire is for District 95 to be a premier district. I have long said that being a premier district is an abstract notion, a notion that is not achieved by meeting established criteria. Rather, when you arrive, you arrive. Clearly, District 95 has arrived. Every aspect of our District suggests or demonstrates that District 95 is a premier district. Our work now is to remain a premier district and offer our knowledge, guidance, and support in helping other districts to become premier as well.