

Brookfield-LaGrange Park School District #95
Superintendent's 2016-2017 Mid-Year Report

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Superintendent Mid-Year Report, 2016-2017

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

Although the goals are broad, there have been certain key areas focus established for each goal. These key areas are addressed in detail in PART ONE of this report.

This report also serves 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 section. 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: Outline vision, to enhance administrative efficiencies through the use of technology and to address the use of technology in curriculum and instructional practice.

Key Areas of Focus:

- Integrate student technology resources in the classroom
- Develop the capacity of Mastery Connect as a Parent Portal

Develop a plan to integrate student technology resources in the classroom

In 2015-2016, a process was devised to determine what technology resources would be incorporated into the classroom. We used that process to determine the resources that would be integrated for the 2016-2017 year. We have fully integrated all the technology resources that were identified in 15-16. At SEG, we implemented a classroom set of IPADS to be used at each grade level in Science. These IPADS allowed two things to occur. First, it supported the STEM SCOPES curriculum support materials used in grades 6-8. Second, it reduced the draw on the existing computer labs to allow greater access for other content areas. Also at SEG, interactive smart boards were installed in every math classroom allowing the delivery of math curriculum to be more aligned with 21st century learning. An interactive board was also placed in the renovated learning center to allow all teachers the opportunity to incorporate it with lessons when desired. At BP, we added to the existing arsenal of laptop carts to account for one laptop cart at each grade and an additional cart for the specials. We also added one interactive smart board per grade level that was designed to be moveable from classroom to classroom dependent on teacher use.

Moving forward, there is an identified need to continue increasing access at BP for student devices within the classroom. The current configuration allows for about 6 devices per classroom. A goal would be to double those devices within the next year. At SEG, the current amount of devices seems desirable, yet the use of a designated lab is becoming outdated. Finding a solution that migrates away from the computer labs and moves into the direction of having classroom-based devices is desirable. Moreover, it is important to note that with the addition of devices and expectations for teachers to instruct with them, it will be necessary to develop a model of instructional technology support as well as possible increase in staff that respond to the need to repair/fix the

devices. Lastly, it will be critical to continue closely monitoring the fiscal resources of the district to match the ability to replace obsolete equipment as the district navigates its future.

Develop the capacity of Mastery Connect as a parent portal

Mastery Connect (MC) has been ongoing work to systematically align our curriculum, allow an avenue for staff to develop common assessments, build standards based report cards, and ultimately be used as a mechanism to allow parents access to very in-depth information about their child's work and performance.

This year, MC has been opened to allow parents access to view their child's performance and also the ability to drill down in to those outcomes to understand more deeply what is covered in each of those outcomes. At SEG, the parent portal is open to all grades. BP will have the parent portal open to grades 3-5 beginning in the 4th quarter. Grades 1-2 will be open in the fall of 2017-18 year. It is important to note that opening the parent portal is linked to using MC to record all grades. SEG use of MC as the standards based report card made it easier for them to open the portal to all grades as they are slightly ahead of the curve with their use of MC.

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

Key Areas of Focus:

- Systematically implement standards based report cards at SEG
- Develop a professional growth model for math instruction at BP

Systematically implement standards based report cards at SEG.

SEG is using the Mastery Connect (MC) tool as the basis for its Standards Based Report (SBR) cards. Currently, 6th grade students are being issued the SBR. Keeping in mind that current 6th graders were receiving SBR from their BP experience, the transition at SEG was rather smooth. In 2017-18, 6th and 7th graders will receive SBR. In 2018-19, SEG will have all grades fully using SBR.

BP is has been fully using the SBR at all grade levels for the last 3 years. As Mastery Connect (MC) has emerged and staff is witnessing the power within the tool, we are set to switch grades 4-5 from the original SBR to the current model using MC as the tool to produce the SBR.

Develop a professional development model for math instruction at BP

In 2015-16, the District undertook the task of adopting a new instructional series, Go Math, to support our math curriculum in grades k-5. The attraction to Go Math was its connection with student led, inquiry based strategies. This type of instructional strategy supports the rigor in our math curriculum, but was not necessarily part of all teachers instructional paradigm. Thus, a staff development model was needed to support teachers

in this movement to Go Math. To that end, we constructed a professional development model linked to UIC. In the summer of 2016, we sent a math leadership team of six teachers to a two-day workshop that trained them in inquiry-based strategies. The six leaders—one from each grade level—continue training through the 2016-17 year by attending 5 other professional trainings throughout the year. At the building level, we have built in time to the common team time that focuses on the leaders providing training directly to the teachers on their grade level teams.

Knowing that the professional development may take more than just this year to get the entire BP staff fully comprehending how to use this new instructional methodology, we have also included 4 SEG teachers to participate in the formal training from UIC so that future district level trainings would have more support. Moving forward, I suspect we will need to continue training our individual teachers and any new staff.

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

Key Areas of Focus:

- Develop an action plan to increase classroom communication with parents
- Implement student growth measures into teacher evaluation

Develop an action plan to increase classroom communication with parents

Seemingly simple in context, but more involved in implementation was the plan to increase classroom communication with parents. The plan included conducting a staff survey at each building that would allow us to understand all the various ways communication was taking place coupled with knowing what may be effective routes moving forward. Trying to implement practical changes immediately was a priority.

What became immediately evident was the fact that trying to use websites as a vehicle to communicate to parents was not effective. The ability for teachers to manage the websites and keep them up to date was cumbersome and riddled with technology limitations. Further, the sheer nature of technology competency made for the websites to vary so much from teacher to teacher that a parent became easily confused as how to navigate the sites. All of this is compounded by fact that our technology driven information sharing vehicles are most effective when there are not a lot of “clicks” involved, meaning parents want easy and routine updates without a lot of hassle. It became clear that we needed a proactive method of communicating. One where the access was 1) easy to maneuver and 2) one that does not rely on parents to simply check in (they need to be prompted).

It was clear from the survey that most teachers and parents preferred to communicate through electronic avenues and that access to student information (i.e. homework, assignments, progress etc.) was paramount to parents. General information (i.e.

reminders about upcoming events, field trips, activities etc.) was an important item, but has been solved with the electronic version of weekly updates the building principals send. The focus was placed on direct classroom communication.

To that end, SEG made the move in December to using a shared document versus the classroom websites. It was designed to limit the amount of searching a parent has to do to find a teacher's homework or class communication. Instead of finding nine teacher's pages, which could all look very different and have extremely different navigating methods, this is a one-stop shop. In order to also move beyond basic homework assignments, this process communicates what is occurring each day in class, not just homework assignments. This affords parents the opportunity to view daily what was accomplished within the classroom.

While not directly related to parent communication, a side benefit for SEG is that this has allowed administrative access to this material as well. Administrators can very clearly see what is occurring in the classrooms in through a quick review. Further, teachers can all view each other's classes and they can coordinate test and big project dates more effectively.

The issue of building uniformity at Brook Park is little more complex in that we can't organize a group of teachers around a "team" or "grade-level" as each person is not doing the exact same thing. Students are unique to one teacher unlike the middle school where they travel to multiple teachers. In an attempt to move away from the cumbersome teacher websites, about 50% of the teachers at BP have begun using more parent friendly applications such as Seesaw or ClassDojo to communicate what is occurring at the classroom level. This application does include a feature that alerts parents to check into the site. This may serve as a solution at BP.

While I believe that communication between the classroom and home have been made more effective, I do believe we have some work to do to find and implement a vehicle that will send notices (i.e. email) to parents where they are then prompted to check the information coming from the teacher. We need some sort of vehicle similar to the alert solutions used at the District level to communicate emergencies, which can be used at classroom level.

Implement student growth measures into teacher evaluation

As you may know, legislation now requires us to have a student growth measure incorporated into the teacher evaluation protocol. In short, we have included in our teacher evaluation protocol a student growth measure that allows an evaluation rating to be assigned to teachers based on a group of students' growth over time. In addition to meeting the state mandated requirement of adding this component to the teacher evaluation tool, it was my hope that this endeavor would foster a much larger outcome: to bring value to common assessments and promote professional dialogue about student growth based on student performance data.

In addition to the traditional classroom evaluations, teachers have utilized common assessments as a pre/post measure of student growth. Teachers are required to select one math goal (this was a goal chosen by the district to align with the work being done in math) and one goal of their choosing. The teachers identify the instructional outcome (i.e. ability to add fractions), conduct a pre-test of students in a particular group (i.e. all 3rd graders) and then set a growth goal based on the pre-test data (i.e. 80% of students will attain at least a 10% increase on the post-test). Teachers are then given a rating on this process, which accounts for 25% of their overall evaluation.

Closing Recommendations:

The work referenced above, for the most part, is completed and/or implemented. Further, most of the key factors have been achieved and work to promote those efforts are moving forward often in an expedited manner. However, as we move through the end of the school year, a few items remain as outstanding work:

1. Continue to work towards full implementation of SBR aligned with MC.
2. Continue to implement MC parent portal at all grades.
3. Continue building professional growth opportunities for Math.
4. Implement a support model for instructional technology.

PART TWO:

Financial Status of the District

For the second year in a row, we have adopted our budget to align with the start of the fiscal year. In short, we approved the FY17 budget in May, had it displayed for the required 30 days, and had it adopted at the last meeting in June. The budget estimated \$13,424,140 in revenues and 13,417,633 in expenditures. The district's fund balance as of December 30, 2016 was \$8,524,838, or about \$500,000 more than one year ago. The district has expended 52% of its estimated expenditures and received 50% of its estimated revenue. Based on a review of financial data, the District is operating within its means and revenues are streaming in as predicted. It should be noted that the District has enjoyed a few years of a healthy operations budget that has consciously and cautiously been spent down to tackle very necessary building issues. That practice cannot continue at the rate it has progressed over the last 3 years while maintaining a reasonable fund balance to address unforeseen issues beyond our control. We have encountered no major surprises to date, but a fund balance should be retained to address issue in a timely manner to avoid compounding costs. 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.

Instructional Strength of the District:

District 95 continues to provide strong academic programming fostered by well-planned, well-thought out professional development. Although the math professional development program was detailed within this report, it is important to note that institute days, faculty meetings, and, now, common plan time all facilitate professional growth opportunities for our staff.

In October, the Board had the opportunity to view our local assessment data (MAP), which again indicates our students across all grades are meeting targeted growth points. Earlier than ever before we have received our 8th grade placement data, which has long served as a benchmark for student performance. With more than 52% of our current 8th graders placing in honors math and/or English at RB coupled with 65% of SEG students currently a freshman at RB making the honor roll, we are reminded that our students are leaving our District well prepared.

Status of the physical plant:

Much of the year has been spent solidifying the long-term solution to address the student population and educating the community about that solution. Upon a successful April referendum, we will be moving those plans forward and the work to identify the actual learning space design and the supports that occupy those spaces will become real and intense.

Although, the new building initiatives have seemed to overwhelm our time in the area of buildings and grounds, it is important to note that the day to day operations of the district continue to foster the existing learning environments. Tracking of energy use data has shown that the district's work to address energy consumption has been worthwhile and provides a cost savings to the District. Further, the District has remained steadfast in ensuring long-range building project needs are reviewed and placed into consideration at the budget development level.

Closing Remarks:

The goals outlined for the 2016-2017 year have been or are in process of being completed and represent solid attention to the key areas. Likewise, the financial stability, instructional programming and physical plant are representative of a District that has positioned itself to continue great things.