

Dear Dobbs Ferry Community,



As is so often the case, the fall semester is moving very quickly and suddenly the first marking period, winter sports and the holidays are upon us. But what a first quarter it has been with lots of work happening on multiple fronts with a focus on how we can grow as educators, and improve upon our instructional practices in order to benefit student learning.

Our mantra and the reason we are here as a school district is to create the conditions in which great teaching and learning can take place. This is not just for students and staff; this is for all of us. For many of our staff, professional development and shared readings of articles and books on improving instruction and thinking very intentionally about how we teach our children to read is increasingly common. For our parents, I hope that you had a chance to attend the Illustrative Math Middle School and Springhurst presentations, or view the videos on the website from K-8 Math Specialist Josh Rosen's Family Math Workshops. This is a great way to support your children at home, and become familiar with what a problem-based curriculum entails. We want to partner with our school families on these types of learning opportunities to better ensure that everyone understands this work and can support our students to do and be their very best.

In addition, over the past three months I have been meeting regularly with the Board of Education (BOE) president and vice-president to look at the structure and function of our various Board committees in an effort to unify our support of teaching and learning in every possible way. This work and the work of the Board and administration is embodied in the District Goals that the Board adopted at the November 15 meeting. The goals focus on the creation of frameworks, systems, and long-range plans that will help us manage our very limited time to the best advantage of students and staff. We anticipate that this work will serve as a bridge to the development of the next version of the District's Strategic Plan. Coming to Board of Education meetings or watching the livestream is a great way to keep abreast of this work, and how it will make our schools more effective and efficient centers of learning.

Finally, but of primary importance, creating a safe, welcoming, and affirming environment, and an overall feeling of well-being, helps provide an atmosphere for focused teaching and learning not only in classrooms, but also while students are engaged in our student clubs and athletics. We want our students to become confident, well-rounded, knowledgeable and inquisitive citizens of the world, and their feeling of safety and security is a significant part of the equation in this day and age.

We hope you will join us in continuing to develop a culture of continuous improvement, whether it's tuning-in to a BOE meeting, joining volunteer parents' groups, or reading with your child each night at home. In all of this work, we look forward to writing this next chapter together.

Sincerely,

*Ken Slentz*

Superintendent of Schools