



December 2016

Happy holidays –

I hope this correspondence reaches you and yours in good health and happiness this holiday season. As you know, many changes have been taking place at Flint Community Schools this year, and will continue to occur in the months and years ahead. While many of these changes are at a structural level, it is my firm belief that it is the changes that occur within the walls of the classroom that will move our district forward, and ensure a world-class educational experience for every student in the district.

For that reason, we have a laser-like focus on high quality teaching and learning, paired with goals that are ambitious but attainable in the years to come. Early in the year, I identified four specific areas of instruction that we must focus on. The first of these areas is learning targets – we must be able to identify concrete objectives, both small and large, that our students can understand if we are to prepare them for success. These measurable targets will allow us a better grasp on educational achievement.

The second area of focus is time on tasks. While eight hours may seem like plenty of time in the classroom, there is a great amount our skilled teachers must cover in that time, and it is essential that we engage students throughout the entire day. Any activity that interferes with this engagement – be it time spent waiting in line for the restroom or standing at the door waiting for the bell to ring – must be examined in order to determine the most efficient strategies for all-day engagement.

The third identified area of focus is cognitive engagement. As we continue to adapt to Common Core standards for education, we must strive to not only meet, but exceed the guidelines for rigorous instruction and autonomy for our students. In providing these opportunities through teacher instruction, we can position our students for success.

Finally, we are focused on monitoring learning. It is not merely enough for our students to be presented with the information needed, it is essential that each and every child “gets it” and none of our learners are left behind. In order to ensure this, we have skilled specialists monitoring learning in real-time, and providing our educators with the resources they need to reach these objectives.

As a leadership team, we are in the classrooms daily overseeing the implementation of these objectives. Our dedicated teachers are swiftly making these changes and are already having an impact on our students. Our district instructional specialists are partnering with our teachers to provide professional development opportunities, while also providing immediate feedback as they conduct walk-throughs throughout the district.

These goals can, and will, be achieved for our schools. By next month, we anticipate that 100 percent of our teachers will be posting formal learning targets for their students, and in doing so, identifying achievable goals for the success of every child. Already, as I visit classrooms throughout the district, I am seeing targets posted and students engaged at every turn.

Of course, none of these goals would be achievable without the commitment and tireless dedication of the tremendous educators at Flint Community Schools. I am pleased to say that our teachers have been very supportive of these goals and understand the importance in reaching them. We must continue to support our teachers in their efforts and ensure they have the tools that they need to provide the best possible cognitive opportunities for our learners.

We must also continue seeking opportunities to improve. To that end, I recently created a Superintendent Advisory Board, which includes representation from the Mayor's office, university leadership and foundational leadership within the community.

Through partnerships like these ones, we will continue to learn from the brightest minds in our communities about how we can best support and position our students for the future. I anticipate many new developments to come from these partnerships, so stay tuned for updates as we identify these opportunities in the coming months!

Once again, on behalf of everyone at Flint Community Schools, wishing you and your family a very happy holiday season.

Educationally yours,

Bilal Tawwab
Superintendent, FCS

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