



## Letter from Jen

Dear Colleagues,

Happy (almost) Summer!

As many of you know, this year we've been working on implementing a plan for making gains in student achievement, a plan that was developed collaboratively a year ago in an effort to address our most pressing needs as a district.

We started this work with a focus on making sure that our core instructional program is strong. While effective intervention is essential, it cannot take the place of good first instruction.

For example, we've begun working on developing new units of study in literacy K-8 that provide more guidance and support for teachers, while still providing flexibility. We've also been working on establishing common benchmark assessments in literacy and mathematics K-8 so that we have common ways of measuring progress towards learning the standards. At the high school level, this same kind of work is happening through our course-alike professional learning communities. In other words, we've been working on better defining *what* we teach.

The next step is to define what we mean by "good teaching" - - *how* we teach it. What are those critical instructional strategies that we want to see happening in every classroom? How can we help teachers strengthen their current practice in these areas? We've invited a representative group of teachers, principals, university partners, parents, and central office staff to a district-wide Colloquium to identify this set of instructional approaches. From there, we can better plan all future professional development, beginning in 2008-2009.

Finally, I'd like to thank the many teachers, principals, and parents who have been giving us feedback and input along the way. Your insight makes our work stronger. I look forward to continuing our work together next year.

Sincerely,  
Jennifer Cheatham

## Professional LEARNING

Professional Development is offered in response to district need, and teacher, principal and administrator requests. Here are a few highlights for this summer:

### Assessment System

In the fall of 2008, we will begin to phase in our new district assessment system K-12—designed to provide you with quality information about your students so that you can better plan instruction and early intervention. Beginning June 10, we will be offering a series of informational sessions about the new assessment system.

### Science Adoption

This spring, the Board approved the adoption of new instructional materials in science K-8. This summer, we are offering opportunities for you to learn about how best to use the new materials so that you'll get off to a strong start in 2008-09. To register, go to <http://registration.sandi.net/>.

### Literacy Open House

Launching the New School Year in Literacy! The Literacy Department will hold an Open House on Thursday, June 26, from 9 a.m. to noon, and 2-5 p.m. Grades 1, 3, 5, 6, 7, and 8 teachers are invited to visit the Literacy Department and pick up revised copies of Unit 1. To register, go to <http://registration.sandi.net/>. Grades K, 2, and 4 will have an opportunity to learn about the new units for their grade levels in August.

### Pulitzer Prize Winner in History

Daniel Walker Howe, the recipient of the 2008 Pulitzer Prize in History, will deliver a lecture on August 28. This event, and other summer professional development activities for history/social studies teachers, may be found on the C&I website. To register, go to <http://registration.sandi.net/>.

### Mathematics Summer Professional Development

*K-7 Developing Mathematical Ideas: Building a System of Tens or Reasoning Algebraically about Operations.* These sessions help teachers improve the way they teach the big ideas of K- 7 Mathematics. To register, contact Venus Matos at 619-725-7313.

Starting in the Fall of 2008, all registration for professional development will occur on-line at <http://registration.sandi.net/>!

For a complete list of summer PD, go to [http://www.sandi.net/staff/calendar/0708\\_curriculum\\_instruction.pdf](http://www.sandi.net/staff/calendar/0708_curriculum_instruction.pdf).

# What's NEW

To help meet the needs of every student, the district plan focuses on five priority areas. Here's a highlight of some of the work that has been accomplished this year in each area, as well as next steps for the future.

## **High Expectations: Standards-Based Report Cards**

This year, 58 elementary schools piloted the district's new Standards-Based Report Card (SBRC). Professional development for teachers focused on learning how to analyze a body of sample student work in order to determine their proficiency on the standards. Thanks to the hard work of our pilot schools, we are now poised to introduce the standards-based report card at all elementary schools district-wide.

## **Purposeful and Timely Use of Data: Data Management Tool**

On January 22, the school board approved a contract with Achieve! Data Solutions to provide a web-based data management tool (DMT) for district-wide use. The DMT will allow teachers, principals, and central office staff to access a variety of student achievement reports; to print and scan student answer documents for district assessments on site; and to generate reports of student performance on those assessments within minutes of scanning. Phase-in of the DMT will begin this fall through Standards, Assessment and Accountability.

## **Strategic Support: Systems of Intervention**

This year, several elementary schools have been piloting an approach to systematic intervention, sometimes called "Response to Intervention." These schools have been working on innovative ways to provide targeted intervention for struggling learners in three tiers. Please see our Systems of Intervention framework and PowerPoint at [http://www.sandi.net/depts/dep\\_superintendent/instruction.html](http://www.sandi.net/depts/dep_superintendent/instruction.html). In the coming year, we will support all schools as they design systematic approaches to intervention.

## **Professional Learning: Developing Professional Learning Communities Focused on Results**

This year, a professional development series was held for principals and vice-principals on how to improve teacher collaboration time by strengthening professional learning communities in their schools. Next year, we will be expanding this professional development to include principals and instructional leadership teams since shared leadership is the key to school-wide improvement. Look for more information in August about how to sign up.

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