



February 2, 2018

Superintendent's First Year in Review

Dear WJCC Schools Families and Community Members:

As I approach my one-year anniversary as the superintendent of schools and reflect on a very rewarding and exciting first year, I want to share some of the highlights of how I have spent my time. During this period, I have devoted time to listening, learning, and building upon the positive relationships I have within the organization and the community; restructuring the organization to more fully support schools; redefining systems and processes; improving communications; and gathering information to strategically build on our strengths in the area of academic achievement.

Actions during my first year include the following:

- Reorganizing central office leadership, with no additional impact on the division's budget, to place emphasis on instruction and more fully support individual schools
- Initiating a communications audit to identify areas of challenge, guide improvements, and strengthen our communication strategies. Through focus groups, individual interviews, and on-line surveys, we engaged over 1,700 staff, families, and community members who provided valuable input on how we could improve our internal and external communications. We listened, and we have started implementing some of the audit recommendations. For example, a new monthly external e-newsletter was launched and now has 1,619 subscribers; upgrades have been made to the WJCC Schools website, and we are making use of more videos to inform you of our good news. To review the recommendations of the communications audit, please go to the following link on the WJCC Schools webpage: <https://wjccschools.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/WJCC-Audit-Report-Final.pdf>
- Ensuring a strong focus on academic achievement and equity through regular presentations to the School Board and community on how we are addressing the needs of all students through first-time instruction and intervention strategies. *Equity through Engagement* presentations are posted at the following link on the WJCC Schools webpage: <https://wjccschools.org/about-wjcc/equity-through-engagement-2/>
- Conducting an in-depth analysis of how current instructional initiatives, programs, and practices are impacting student achievement. The analysis assessed the depth and fidelity of implementation of programs/practices and the impact on student outcomes. This information will be used to inform instructional goals and focus areas in the new division strategic plan.
- Creating an Assessment Task Force to review the role and number of assessments within WJCC Schools, ultimately leading to a reduction in the number of tests/assessments administered to students and giving time back to classroom instruction

These are a few of the highlights! Great things are happening in WJCC Schools, not because of me but because of the incredible support I have received from our families, the community, and the School Board, as well as the WJCC Schools' administrators, teachers, and staff who lead and serve our students every day. We have so much to be proud of in WJCC Schools! To name a few, Stonehouse Elementary School was named a National Blue Ribbon School; all high schools piloted innovative programs/courses (*Pathways*, *Linc5*, *Concourse 9*) to fully engage our high school students in learning; graduation and high school completion rates both increased and our dropout rate decreased by 1.2 percent. In addition, I believe our strong focus on early literacy in the last two years will positively impact student outcomes.

Thank you for collaborating with us this year and providing valued input as we addressed the challenges of redistricting and survived the most snow days we have had in several years. There is still much to be done before this school year comes to a close such as final preparations for the opening of James Blair Middle School. Next month, we will launch the process to reauthorize the division's strategic plan and will invite you to be involved in establishing our direction and goals for the next three to five years.

I look forward to your continued collaboration as we work together to prepare our young people to be college, career, and life ready to meet the challenges of the future. I believe our work will not only impact the lives of students but also impact the community at large. It has been an incredible honor to serve WJCC Schools over the past year. Please know I remain fully committed to academic excellence, equity, and sustaining a climate of trust and respect within the school division as we seek to fulfill our vision of *pursuing excellence and championing the success of all students*.

With sincere regards,

Olwen E. Herron
Superintendent