

A Season of Change at Beaverton Schools

By Susan Wooden



Fall is the turning season. Leaves are turning to fiery shades of orange and red; summer is turning into scholarly endeavors; and the leadership of our school district has turned. The stakeholders of Beaverton Rural Schools have embarked on a new school year with an enticing

opportunity to blaze a new path. With the strong leadership of the Board of Education and the unwavering support of the Beaverton community, we have turned the corner on the past and look to the future with a renewed sense of spirit and pride in our organization.

This is our pledge: We will change...and innovate...and take every advantage to improve, whether they come in baby steps or giant strides. Our mantra around the district these days is simple yet ambitious: Higher Expectations. We're determined that the daily operation of the district will meet and exceed the highest standards in each department. Here's how we'll do it; here's how we spent our summer vacation.

Improvements to School Campus

- Beaverton Sports Boosters and the Beaverton Youth Football League donated all funds for landscaping around the electronic sign and flag pole in front of the Administration Building and for re-seeding the baseball diamond. Freeman Nursery managed the projects and we appreciate their investment in our schools.
- Signage across the district was straightened and reduced, where applicable.
- Overgrown shrubbery and trees were trimmed or removed if they impeded student safety.

- Athletic Activity Funds, which are not part of the district's general budget, provided for fence repair and widening of the interior gate at the football field, making potential ambulance transfers safer, quicker and more efficient. These funds also supported the addition of a certified athletic trainer.

Professional Accountability

- Bolstered by an armload of staff and community input, the board has established goals and strategies for the superintendent. The board will facilitate Quarterly Dialogues (formative assessments) with me to measure my progress toward those goals. A formal evaluation will occur in March 2014 (summative assessment) using the board-adopted School Advance evaluation rubric.
- That superintendent evaluation tool will also provide the template for evaluating our principals; alignment with the superintendent's model will increase consistency.
- Teachers will be evaluated with a new tool called Five Dimensions (5D+), which is based upon best-practice research.
- Because of the emphasis on Michigan's Annual Educator Evaluation process, it is essential that we implement a model with consistency, transparency and fidelity. Teachers and paraprofessionals received extensive training in the 5D+ evaluation tool from a national expert, Colin Ripmaster, of the Michigan Association of Secondary School Principals. Stage I training included *Purpose and Classroom Environment & Climate*. Stage II training will take place December 2 with *Student Engagement* and February 14 with *Curriculum & Pedagogy*. We will



continue with *Assessment for Student Learning* training next summer.

- Teachers are also creating a Professional Practices Portfolio, designed by Dr. Edward Roeber of Michigan State University, to measure the *Professional Collaboration & Communication* dimension from 5D+. The portfolio is endorsed by the Michigan Education Association.
- Additionally, all staff are committed to displaying exceptional professionalism at all times by adhering to board policy, honoring our profession with business casual attire and promoting an environment of mutual trust and respect throughout our organization, as well as the community.

Curriculum & Instruction

- A Curriculum Audit will be conducted across the district, top to bottom, K through 12. The audit is a systematic evaluation of the curriculum structures, processes and products in place at present. The advantages of a curriculum audit are numerous, including providing useful data for prioritizing curricular needs; identifying strengths and weaknesses; providing excellent experience in planning and conducting other evaluations; and conveying the clear belief in an open evaluation process.
- New interventions are in place for improved student achievement in mathematics, reading and writing.
- Administrators and teachers are participating in a year-long book study by reading *Better Learning Through Structured Teaching*, written by Doug Fisher and

Nancy Frey. The study will improve our efforts to deliver instruction with deliberate purpose and explicitness. Through a gradual release of responsibility, transferring knowledge from the teacher to students, students collaborate with each other and eventually become independent learners by gradually accepting more responsibility.

Education that appears regularly in this space and at the district's website, beavertonruralschools.com.)

Alignment of All Processes and Procedures

- Emphasis will be placed on system-thinking (as one system) rather than separate buildings/departments.
- Emphasis will be placed on strict adherence to board policy to drive all district processes and procedures.

Early & Often Communication with Stakeholders:

- Through greater use of technology, the district will continue its efforts to communicate with community stakeholders early and often.
- A District Communications Team will be designed to promote greater communication with internal and external stakeholders.
- There will be an infusion of technology to promote efficiency, timeliness and increase the number of communications per day, week, month and year.
- All buildings will design a Points of Pride document for distribution to new families and community stakeholders.
- Greater emphasis will be placed on community partnerships and increasing student enrollment.
- The district website, which is now easier to locate at beavertonruralschools.com, will be transformed to increase visual appeal and navigation.

Thank you for the privilege of serving as your superintendent. Please contact me with inquiries or suggestions at swooden@beavertonruralschools.com or 989-246-3068.

(Susan M. Wooden is Superintendent of Beaverton Rural Schools. The Red Report is a column of opinion by members of the BRS Administration, Staff or Board of