

July 16, 2009

Board Members:

RE: ACADEMIC GOALS FOR 2009-2010

Background Information

At the June 11 Board of Education meeting, a report was provided that summarized and documented academic progress for 2008-09. One of the observations in that report is that the use of Prairie State Achievement Examination (PSAE) results as a means of reviewing progress and setting goals has been severely limited by the contention that the PSAE does not accurately reflect progress made by students in achieving the standards set for them. This concern has been brought to the attention of State Officials on several occasions, but no remedy has been advanced to address this issue.

In no way does this circumstance remove the obligation or diminish the intention of the Board of Education, the administration, and the faculty to pursue an expectation for increased achievement for all of our students. However, the shortcomings of the State test now require a re-focus of our staff on different targets to measure our progress in addressing this most important responsibility. To that end, a team consisting of Associate Superintendent for Instruction Jeffrey Butzen, Director of Curriculum and Student Services Samantha Dolen, and the principals of all five high schools met at my direction to establish a new goal and targets for achievement in the coming year.

Additional Information

Any potential academic goal and related measures and targets would need to reflect a specific set of characteristics in order to be appropriate for long-term adoption in our District. To be considered, the goal, measures and targets must be:

1. Aligned to our District mission;
2. Research-based;
3. Applicable to students of all levels of ability and achievement;
4. Clear and measurable indicators of progress;
5. Multi-year by design;
6. Of a form that can be communicated to all stakeholders;
7. Supportive of our current directs and emphases;
8. Flexible in enabling schools to implement a variety of both common and individual initiatives to address their student populations and their academic needs.

To that end, the following academic goal structure is proposed:

Goal: Accelerate Academic Achievement for All Students

Underlying Beliefs

- 1. Each student should have options for college and career upon graduation from a District 211 school.*
- 2. The communication and mathematics knowledge and skill sets required for entry into college or vocational post-high school endeavors are increasingly the same.*
- 3. Students must obtain “21st-century skills” such as the ability to think critically, solve problems, communicate and listen effectively, access and analyze information and then apply what is learned, become self-learners, and collaborate and innovate to be competitive in a global economy.*

Measurements of Progress

1. Student growth in both the Explore-Plan-ACT Reading and Mathematics subtests will be measured for each subgroup designated for that school by the state of Illinois.

2009-10 Targets for Measurement #1

- Achievement Target:
In 2009-2010, the percent of students in each subgroup who have reached or surpassed the college readiness standard for reading (21) and for mathematics (22) will increase over 2008-09.
 - Growth Target:
In 2009-2010, the percent of students in each subgroup whose scores from the Explore to ACT test grow in reading and mathematics by 5-7 point will increase.
2. Student placement in coursework during 2009-2010 will demonstrate acceleration.

2009-10 Targets for Measurement #2

- Growth target:
In 2009-2010, the percent of students enrolled in courses ending in a 0, 1, or 4 will decrease.
- Growth target:
In 2009-2010, the percent of students enrolled in at least one course ending in an 8 or 9 will increase.

3. Student achievement will be measured through faculty implementation of the Critical Learning Standards process.

2009-10 Targets for Measurement #3

- Evaluation target:
In 2009-2010, the number of formative and districtwide assessments administered to students enrolled in mathematics, English (reading and writing), and Science courses that contribute to an evaluation of critical learning standards will increase in each area.
- Evaluation target:
In 2009-2010, all non-core department teachers will develop and administer, within each of their own courses, additional assessments of literacy-related critical learning standards.
- Growth Target:
In 2009-10, the percent of students who score a 3 or higher on an established Critical Learning Standard will increase.

As was stated in the progress report for 2008-09, the progress made in 2008-09 was supported significantly by morning work sessions. These sessions provided an ongoing platform for principals and school instructional leaders to pursue academic improvement strategies with their entire faculty on an ongoing basis. The principals were unanimous in their depiction of the sessions as the cornerstone to acceptance and implementation of instructional and curricular innovation by the entire faculty.

If approved, each morning work session would be 90 minutes in length. The daily class schedule would start on these days following the work sessions at 9:10 a.m. for early start schools and at 9:50 a.m. for late start schools. Transportation schedules would be modified accordingly. Each principal will once again be required to submit an agenda for each morning work session prior to approval and must provide a report on the accomplishment of each session, along with artifacts, following each session.

Provision of documentation and artifacts regarding the use of the morning work sessions to accomplish the 2009-2010 academic targets would be included as part of the principal's evaluation.

Suggested Motion:

That the Board of Education authorize the Superintendent to approve morning work sessions, each of which would be 90 minutes, on Tuesdays, September 22, 2009; October 6, 2009; November 3 and 17, 2009; December 1, 2009; January 12, 2010; February 9 and 23, 2010; March 9, 2010; and April 13, 2010.

Nancy N. Robb
Superintendent