



September 25, 2008

Board Members:

**RE: Executive Summary: Morning Schoolwide Work Sessions
Proposal for 2008-09**

The schools of District 211 have been provided by the Board of Education with the opportunity to hold morning work sessions on several dates throughout the past three school years. The vision that has guided these work sessions has stemmed from the three questions that must be addressed if we are to achieve our educational mission:

1. What should our students know?
2. How will we be able to tell if they know it?
3. What will we do if they do not know it?

Many innovative programs and practices now in place had a genesis in these work sessions. However, as we enter 2008-09, responsible and productive work becomes more challenging as we have reached certainty that the state assessment system that has served in the past as measure of our progress is defective. The lack of reliable state test results does not diminish our need to evaluate progress in each of our schools towards advancing the education of all of our students. It became imperative that new data sources be developed to direct our work and mark our progress. These new data sources have now been identified and shared. They include data from critical learning standards assessment; summer academy information; MAP test results; Explore-Plan-ACT scores; and the most recent addition, the classroom reading inventories of our students most in need of reading assistance.

While each school has special educational needs based on the population that is served, the universal focus of all schools, and all of their faculties, on specific educational objectives would guide the proposed morning sessions. These include:

1. Necessity of Literacy – consistent with the advancement of the reading and writing critical learning standards, literacy is the foundation in every subject area of both shared and independent learning.
2. Recognition of Data as an Enabling Tool – Educators must learn to identify useful data, evaluate the information that the data provides, and design instructional practices and curriculum that address the academic needs of our students. For this to happen, we must institutionalize the use of formative and benchmark assessments by every teacher in every subject area as a measure of student achievement of critical learning standards.
3. Application of All Instructional Resources – The development of an increased number of reading specialists in our district is an important step forward. However, it is even more important that they share their expertise with the content area staff to create a unified approach to literacy.
4. Implementation of Literacy Practices – How will we answer the third of our questions – *What will we do if they do not know it?* Development and incorporation of multilayered approaches to teaching and learning throughout our educational fabric must be established, reflecting a recognized educational process called

Response to Intervention. In this design, students received multiple and hierarchical opportunities to learn critical concepts and skills.

Finally, the use of Morning Work Sessions must be focused and accountable. To that end, each principal must submit to the Superintendent an agenda of the morning work session for all faculty prior to each session. Additionally, a report on progress, accompanied by related artifacts, must be submitted by each principal following each session.

Suggested Motion: That the Board of Education authorize the Superintendent to approve morning work sessions, each of which would be 90 minutes in length, on October 28, 2008; November 18, 2008; December 9, 2008; February 3 and 17, 2009; March 10, 2009; April 7, 2009; and May 19, 2009.

Roger Thornton
Superintendent