

Superintendent's Report

December 14, 2015

Chair David Jones, members of the Board; it is my pleasure to call your attention to a few items of special interest.

I know that it is difficult to hear about individual behavioral incidents and to keep the big picture in mind and in a context. Know that we monitor data daily. In general, we don't see dramatic differences in the data (i.e., suspensions are up, suspension days are down, overall bus referrals are down, fights are up, 125 students have 5 or more bus referrals, etc.) and we are getting better at capturing the data. The data does not support that we are in a crisis. Employees are dealing with every incident. Employees, frankly, don't understand why it is being portrayed as a crisis. There is definitely a perception problem.

What is the same?

When I began teaching, I remember the expression that school was about 'teaching students how to learn and how to get along with people while they are doing it'. There are standards/expectations for what students are expected to learn and expectations for how they are to behave. There is intentionality/teaching involved in both. That's what schools do.

What is the same?

Some students need more time and support to master the academic expectations. Some students need more time and support to master the behavioral expectations. Knowing how to behave and concentrate is the foundation to learning. Students can't learn what is expected if they are not in the classroom. Students can't learn what is expected if other students are disrupting the classroom.

What is the same?

Learning and behavior are connected. Students who are engaged in relevant learning opportunities — who are connected to the learning — are more likely to behave better. Students who can control their behavior have more time on learning. Students need to feel physically, emotionally, and psychologically safe to concentrate on learning.

What is the same?

Students need to know their behavioral choices have consequences. That is why every district has a Code of Conduct to make expectations and consequences clear. It only works if a student sees the consequence as a negative. (Remember: Some students like to stay home.) It works when students understand the impact of their behavior on themselves and others. Administrators spend their time, in essence, teaching behavior to create learning conditions that are productive.

What is the same?

When a student is suspended, it is important that he/she learns from that in order to make a different choice the next time. It is important that the student learns what they missed (regain their academic footing) so they can be successful when they reenter the classroom. If any one of us missed 3 days of Algebra II, how would we understand what the teacher is teaching on the day we return? (Let me remind you — JCPS invested in transition centers at the secondary level with access to technology solutions to assist with this age-old problem of learning what you missed.) Simply sending the work home (which is a time drain for teachers to prepare) has rarely gotten educators the result we have wanted. We need to be innovative.

What is the same?

We have provided the Board and the community with data. We will ALWAYS be transparent with how our students are doing academically and behaviorally. Data is continuously monitored at the school and district level. The data informs the differentiated support.

What is the same?

Adults are accountable for their behavior as well. Adults make inappropriate choices. That is why we have an employee code of conduct and an employee relations department. That is why we do investigations. Remember — everyone has a right to due process.

What is the same?

This is complex, hard work. It is THE most important work in this community. It is not for everybody. Resignations happen in every line of work. Adults have choices. We have a similar number of resignations every year.

What is the same?

Schools throughout the commonwealth and the nation are dealing with threats. In JCPS, protocols are in place to deal with them. A person can make a call or write a message and disrupt an entire school. We will NEVER take a chance with the safety of our students. We will follow the protocol. Investigating and prosecuting those who make threats is a deterrent and we will pursue that vigorously. That's when we need media attention.

What is different?

A district mirrors society. Our world and our society is changing. We need to continue to be proactive. (JCPS should be proud of the systems and structures we have in place (i.e., check-in systems, cameras, protocols, crisis trainings, security plans, security officers and a Security Department). The Security Department will not let us become complacent. We are working to provide supports for our students.

What is different?

Bad behavioral choices happened when you were in school and — hopefully, handled appropriately so that the disruptive students did not 'get the stage'. 'Getting the stage' reinforces bad behavior. If you make bad behavior the main thing, it will become the main thing. Social media provides instant access to whatever part of the story the provider of the information wants to tell.

Let's make a judgment based on real information in a context. Here are some examples of real JCPS data and trends (SHOW SLIDES).

WE ARE NOT IN A CRISIS. We do not hide that we have challenges. We all need to withhold judgment about a particular situation if we don't know all the facts.

We have protocols in place for expressing concerns — parents and guardians should start with the teacher, the principal, and if they are still concerned, call the Area Assistant Superintendent. Our district is made smaller and more personal by being divided into 6 areas each led by an Area Superintendent who has support from an assistant and a former principal called an Evaluation Transition Coordinator. If they get frustrated or they want to remain confidential, we have an Ombudsman they can call for assistance.

A big rock in the strategic plan is to create a 311 system to quickly answer questions. Our Board Members routinely interact with the public and receive emails always providing that feedback to us.

Our employees should always start with their supervisor to express a concern. If they can't go to their supervisor, they should express it to their supervisor. Every employee has an email. We all report to someone. There are HR protocols in place depending on the type of concern so that you can contact HR. We work closely with our employee associations. Employees can go to their association with a concern. Let me give you an example — we heard a concern from two places — our specialists and JCTA — that special area teachers were being asked to put an inordinate number of grades into the system. We all agreed that there was a problem. We worked collaboratively with JCTA and the agreed-upon solution is being presented to the Board tonight for approval. Employees also have access to the Ombudsman. Again she is a confidential resource. She will help them get into the right process.

I wish I could "tweet" what every great teacher is doing every day to teach our students. I wish I could "tweet" the incredible things our students are learning. I wish I could "tweet" about every support employee who tells me that they love what they do and want me to know they are 1 of 15,000 JCPS employees. I wish I could "tweet" about every hour that

board members who devote to providing governance for this system. I wish I could "tweet" about every minute that an administrator goes the extra mile to support the needs of a student or a family.

We are working to provide a quality education to students who are excelling and to those who need us the most — we are the chance our students have!!! Let's continue to talk about the life-changing, community-changing importance of what we are doing, and how we are working collaboratively to solve any challenges, and how that is worth our best effort.

Speaking of life-changing and life-saving. Sometimes that is literal. — Remember bus driver Ms. Bunny saved a student from choking on a piece of candy. Principal Deb Rivera saved a child's life by giving her CPR. That story is being told nationally. The American Heart Association recognized JCPS for being the #1 Fundraising School District in the region and the #12 District in the nation.

Chair Jones, this concludes my report and my recommendation for approval of the consent agenda later in the meeting.