

There are many things to report on this month. A lot is going on in our small district. We are doing things that we have not ever done before and setting our course to experience new outcomes. I will briefly report on just a few of our current activities.

- The COVID 19 pandemic created new challenges that we were not prepared for. The way we do education came to a halt. We responded as best as we could and our services continued to adjust throughout the pandemic. The provision of ESSER funding offered resources and support to help us address some of the setbacks we experienced. It is our responsibility and hope that we are utilizing this funding in the most effective ways.
  - Summer school - I challenged our principals to create a summer school environment like we've never seen before. I mentioned that we should do school like we always dreamed. We needed that kind of environment in order to provide the level of support that our students needed. I charged principals with the goal of bringing in as many students as we possibly could. I also indicated that the ideal student/teacher ratio was no more than 8/1. Research recommends that this is the optimal setting for accelerated learning. The need was urgent and immediate. The district was faced with possibly retaining 200+ students. Principals, teachers, support staff and bus drivers all answered the challenge. I am pleased to say our summer school program has been a huge success. As you will read in our principal reports. This effort will go unmatched in the future. Our plan is to return to our regular summer school funding after this year. We would certainly like to keep some of the great activities and schedules that we had this year, however, the need will not be so urgent in the years to come. My goal is to move away from the idea of offering remediation and move to providing accelerated learning. Remediation is responding to student needs when students are falling behind. Accelerated learning is planning instruction with student needs in mind and addressing learning deficiencies in the regular classroom. This is something teachers already do, however, the goal is to provide additional support and resources to teachers that will allow more intentional accelerated learning activities. This will be a gradual change over time. I just shared this vision with our district admin today so this is a brand new concept for all of us. It's a major paradigm shift that will take training and time to implement.
  - ESL Summer Camp - This effort was unlike any other as well. We had 50+ students and families participate in our first ESL Summer Camp. These students and families had unique challenges during the COVID pandemic. Learning the English language presents barriers during a normal year. Camp activities included English language instruction, cultural enrichment activities, fun activities and community building opportunities. I am thankful for our EL students and families.
  - SY22 PD planning has been spectacular. Every building has a packed schedule of activities that are on-going and embedded in everyday activities.

In-other-words, our professional development activities are system changes and not just one day of sit-and-get brought to us from those who know it all. Our facilitators, (OVEC, KDE, KYABRI) are committed to our district and have been continuously working with us. We have focused on sustained changes and outcomes when planning our professional learning. Our current administration realizes that in order to move forward and experience positive growth we must recognize what's always been done is not making it happen. We are not suggesting that we stop everything we are doing and go a completely different direction. We are learning to use what we've always done as a starting point. By using new data such as CASE Assessments and iReady, we can identify adjustments that are not radical but very impactful. The most influential change we can continue to make is our own mindset. We must have a core belief that Gallatin County students can meet high expectations. I believe that with our new resources and leadership, we will begin to see student achievement move in a very positive direction. A constant message that I've tried to deliver is for us, as a district, as teachers in the classroom, to stop dwelling on state accountability measures and data. It's a negative cycle that produces a lot of undue stress and anxiety. Instead, we need to focus on intentional planning that includes multiple tiered systems of support, evidence based instructional practices and is outcomes driven. Then we can work the plan each day and feel very positive about our efforts. Thus, eliminating some of the stress and burden we carry. Stress, anxiety and fear are all negative forces that can diminish the effectiveness of teachers and schools.

I am looking forward to the SY22 school year. We will continue to face challenges as that is the nature of the business. Public education has to be one of the most challenging ideas of modern times. Education professionals are expected to be perfect. The average teacher makes over 3000 decisions each day. Research has proven that people start to experience decision fatigue at 500 decisions. I have a great appreciation for our staff. There are easier ways to make a living these days.