

Superintendent's Report

To: Board of Education
From: Dan W. Cox, Superintendent of Schools
Re: Monthly Board of Education Report
Date: October 18, 2023



Gratitude & Celebrations

Celebrating 1st Quarter Success at Rochester CUSD #3a

We are delighted to celebrate the remarkable achievements and progress in the Rochester School District as we mark the end of the 1st quarter. This period has been filled with milestones that we are proud to share, reflecting the dedication, hard work, and unwavering commitment of our educators, staff, students, and the community.

1. Student Learning and Academic Achievement:

We are thrilled to report continued growth in student learning and academic achievement across the District. Our students continue to thrive academically, and this quarter's accomplishments have set a strong foundation for the year ahead.

2. Teacher Retention Rate Over 90%:

One of the key cornerstones of our District's success is our exceptional teaching staff. We are thrilled to announce a teacher retention rate of over 90%. This achievement speaks volumes about our supportive work environment, professional development opportunities, and the dedication of our educators. Retaining highly qualified teachers is essential in delivering top-quality education to our students.

3. Attracting and Retaining Highly Qualified Teachers:

In addition to retaining our dedicated educators, we are also proud to report that we have attracted a talented cohort of new teachers who bring fresh perspectives and expertise to our classrooms. Their enthusiasm and dedication are an invaluable asset to our District, and they have seamlessly integrated into our educational community.

4. Student Success Indicators:

a. Academic Performance and Growth:

Our students' academic performance and growth have recovered from pandemic stressors. We now shift our focus to student growth.

b. Athletic and Fine Arts Excellence:

In the realm of extracurricular activities, our students continue to excel. We have celebrated victories on the courts and fields and showcased impressive talents in the fine arts. Our athletes and artists are a source of pride for our community.

c. Opportunities for All:

We remain steadfast in our commitment to providing equal opportunities for all students, regardless of their background or abilities. Our educators ensure that every student feels supported and empowered to succeed.

d. Increase in Overall Family Engagement:

We are proud to see a marked increase in family engagement over the past quarter. Strong family-school partnerships are crucial for student success, and we are actively working to foster these connections. Our recent family engagement initiatives have been met with enthusiasm and participation from our families.

5. Embarking on Facilities Projects:

As we celebrate these academic successes, we are also excited that we are embarking on a series of facilities projects to enhance and upgrade Rochester High School (RHS). These projects include:

- Athletic Complex Renovations: To foster state-of-the-art facilities that benefit extra-curricular, fine arts, and classroom activities as well as enhance opportunities for community engagement.
- Science Wing Addition: To foster excellence in STEM education, we are expanding our science wing to provide students with cutting-edge laboratories and learning spaces.
- Secure Entrance: The safety and security of our students and staff are paramount. We are enhancing our entrance to ensure a safe and welcoming environment.
- New Student Services Area: A modern and accessible student services area will offer comprehensive support to students in various aspects of their educational journey.

These facilities projects are a testament to our commitment to providing a well-rounded education in a safe and conducive environment. We are excited about the opportunities these upgrades will bring to our students and the broader community.

As we reflect on these achievements, milestones, and our plans for the future, we acknowledge that our journey is far from over. We would like to express our deepest gratitude to our educators, students, families, and the community for their unwavering support. Together, we can continue to create an environment where every student can thrive and reach their full potential.

Let us celebrate the successes of the 1st quarter and look forward to even greater accomplishments in the upcoming school year.

School Bus Driver Roundtable

During the recent school improvement day, a roundtable discussion with bus drivers was led by Dr. Kahler and myself to assess their perspective on current operations and gather input on improving our transportation services.

Positive Recent Improvements:

- Financial Incentives: Drivers expressed positivity regarding the \$1,000 signing bonus and \$1,000 annual retention bonus.
- Route Changes: Route adjustments aimed at improving efficiency were welcomed by drivers, reducing their stress and enabling more efficient service in certain aspects of the operations.
- Support from Administration: Drivers noted the improved support from the administration, which has facilitated smoother operations.
- Elimination of Double Route Transfer: The elimination of the RIS double route transfer was seen as a significant positive change, simplifying the process for both drivers and students.
- Activity Bus Purchase: The acquisition of an activity bus was appreciated.

Areas for Improvement

- Reducing Wait Time at RES Transfer: Drivers highlighted the need to reduce wait times during transfers at RES.
- Student Scanning System: The current student scanning system could benefit from improvement, ensuring accurate tracking of student ridership and reducing wait time.
- Increased Transport Time Home: Drivers noted concerns about longer transport times for students, indicating a need for optimization.
- Driver Shortages: Addressing driver shortages remains a critical issue, affecting the consistency of service.

Drivers' Vision for the Future:

- Drivers are committed to safely and efficiently transporting students. They aspire to foster a culture of strong relationships and support, both among themselves and with the student community.

Action Steps for Consideration

To address these concerns and align with drivers' vision, the indicated the following action steps should be considered:

- Staggered Start: Exploring staggered start times for schools may alleviate wait times during transfers and reduce congestion.
- Route Redesign and Practice Runs: Reassessing and optimizing routes, along with conducting practice runs, will improve efficiency.
- Surveys: Implementing surveys to assess updated bus ridership and route changes will provide valuable feedback from students, parents, and drivers.
- Bus Ride-Alongs: Administration should conduct bus ride-alongs to better understand the daily experiences of drivers and make informed decisions for improvements.

Incorporating these steps into our transportation strategy will further enhance the efficiency and safety of our student transportation services, fulfilling the drivers' commitment to excellence.

Educational League of Illinois

I have been nominated for induction into the Educational League of Illinois (ELI) during a special ceremony at the Joint Annual Conference of School Board Members, Superintendents, and Business Officials. The ELI is a prestigious honor in recognition of outstanding contributions to education within the state. This league celebrates and honors individuals who have demonstrated exemplary dedication, leadership, and innovation in the field of education. It serves as a symbol of achievement and a testament to the significant impact made by those who have dedicated their careers to advancing education in Illinois. I am deeply honored to have been nominated for this distinction and am committed to upholding the high standards and values that the ELI represents, both now and in the future.

Vision 2030 Working Group

I have been nominated to serve as the Illinois Association of School Administrators (IASA) Abe Lincoln Division Representative for the Vision 2030 working group. This group is tasked with shaping priority platforms and advocacy efforts for IASA. Our discussions will revolve around creating a better education system in Illinois, addressing topics like literacy, school safety, Tier 2 pensions, school funding, and the teacher shortage.

The Vision 2030 Working Group is composed of over 40 superintendents representing all 21 IASA regions, along with representatives from various education organizations in Illinois. This

diversity ensures a comprehensive perspective, encompassing urban, suburban, and rural communities, as well as elementary, unit, and high school districts. The discussions will be facilitated and managed by ECRA Group, Inc., a respected educational consulting firm.

I am eager to contribute to this vital effort, which will guide ongoing advocacy in Illinois, building upon the success of Vision 2020. Additionally, I have been selected to co-chair the finance and funding working group, which will focus on policies supporting adequate, equitable, and sustainable funding for Illinois public schools, including the Evidence-Based Funding model, Tier 2 pensions, state revenue, school choice, and local budgeting.

Positive Launch

Remarkable accomplishments are taking place throughout Rochester Schools. Our students, educators, and staff exhibit unwavering dedication, a source of immense pride for all of us. Together, we are crafting a future of excellence, embracing boundless opportunities. It's a great day to be a Rocket!!!

*It's a great day to be a Rocket!!! 
"A Tradition of Excellence!"*