



# Oak Park Elementary School District 97

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**TO:** Members, Board of Education  
**FROM:** Dr. Carol Kelley, Superintendent  
**SUBJECT:** Superintendent Report  
**DATE:** December 6, 2016

The purpose of the attached report is to update the Board of Education and community on the status of the district's goals. In addition to the attached update, below, please find an initial snapshot of our work on the vision plan (to date). *For background information on the development of D97's vision plan, please see pages 4-5 of this memo.*

## **INITIAL SNAPSHOT OF OUR WORK (TO DATE)**

This list is a sampling of work we have begun this school year to move the district toward creating positive learning environments for all D97 students that are equitable, inclusive, and focused on the whole child:

- **Analyzing Teaching for Student Results (ATSR):** To strengthen the quality of informal and formal observation and coaching reports, each principal, assistant principal, and instructional coach in the district has been enrolled in a course called **Analyzing Teaching for Student Results (ATSR)**. **ATSR** is aligned to the Reach for Better Teaching (RBT) program course many teachers and leaders have taken over the last few years in D97.

ATSR is designed to give our school leaders the courage, conviction, and capacity to shift the focus of teacher evaluation process from compliance (*and direction*) to truly supporting (*and empower*) teachers to improve student learning. This shift redefines the role of the principal (and other leaders) as our instructional leaders.

Working with the RBT staff, we have developed a schedule that will provide time for participants to conduct the fieldwork, to deepen their understanding of core concepts about changing instruction, and to develop their skills in observing, note-taking, analyzing, and communicating with teachers about improving student learning. To date, sessions have taken place on June 14, June 16, September 26, and November 7. Please see <http://www.op97.org/aroundthedistrict/index.cfm> for a feature story on ATSR.

- **Formative Assessment for Results (FAR):** To ensure high-functioning team meetings (a teacher team meeting is a team of educators who teach the same content and have a common time to plan), every team leader is participating in a professional learning opportunity called **FAR**, which stands for Formative Assessment for Results. **FAR** is also aligned to the Reach for Better Teaching (RBT) program course many teachers and leaders have taken over the last few years in D97.

As a result of this training, our teacher teams are learning how to use formative assessment to gauge student progress. As a result, we are:

- Providing staff with both the support and the accountability for teachers to improve their formative assessment and other closely related practices, such as communicating clear learning targets to students or providing them with effective feedback.
- Providing a place for teachers to plan learning targets and success criteria together, design and collect good diagnostic questions, analyze formative assessment results, and plan action which teachers can implement in their classrooms.
- Offering teachers a space & place to reflect on their individual teaching and team practice and its impact on student achievement.

- **Written Curriculum Framework:** In the 100-Day Report to the Board of Education on December 1, 2015, one of the key opportunity areas I presented was creating a written curriculum framework to support exemplary teaching and learning.

During the summer (2016), we developed a written curriculum framework that can be used to guide classroom decisions about K-5 literacy instruction and assessment. This curriculum framework has the following attributes:

- Quality organizing centers that are meaningful and engaging to students (these organizing centers incorporate the themes identified in the existing resource documents and prepare students for the IB program at the middle school)
- Essential question and big idea for each unit (to identify the most important learning for the unit)
- Focus standards for each unit (standards that are given specific attention because they are taught and assessed in the unit. In addition to Illinois literacy standards, appropriate outcome statements will be included from the social studies and science curriculums)
- Curriculum-embedded performance assessments identified for each unit (these assessments are designed to produce as well as measure learning and therefore include diagnostic and formative assessment moments)
- Connections to the school resource document (C3 inquiries and the Teachers College Writing Program)

Beginning this Fall, we have worked with a group of staff members (“curriculum team”) to provide feedback on the document. So far this year, our curriculum team has accomplished the following:

- Started integrating reading and writing units of study (RUOS and WUOS) into the written curriculum framework
- Started aligning standards and identifying mentor texts into the written curriculum framework
- Offered suggestions for formatting the curriculum framework for easier use by the teachers
- Examined different ways in which to use the framework to make instructional decisions
- Developed a better understanding of what constitutes quality curriculum

Over the next few weeks, we are planning to make revisions to the documents based upon feedback provided by our D97’s curriculum team. The schedule for the team’s upcoming work is outlined below:

*January 2017* - The curriculum team will continue to work on the curriculum framework. Each team will receive feedback on what they completed during the December 1st meeting with suggestions for next steps. I will be available via video for conferences as they work to address the provided feedback and continue to develop the curriculum framework.

*March 2017* – The curriculum team meeting will address the following topics:

- Organizing centers, and district values and priorities
- Curriculum embedded performance assessments
- Roll out of the curriculum framework

*April 2017* – Curriculum team meeting will plan decisions regarding roll-out of the curriculum framework.

Future work for supporting this project will include professional development support for the district’s instructional coaches, as well as our building leaders. Finally, the project will conclude with refining and editing the collected units produced by our staff to ensure the unit plans reflect the attributes of quality curriculum and have a consistent voice across grade levels. Revisions to the units will be completed prior to the beginning of the summer break.

- **National Equity Project:** In an effort to support D97 district and school-based leaders in how to support the district's vision (strong focus on equity), we have been working with the National Equity Project (NEP) since the summer. Through a variety of workshops and meetings, we have been using this training to help our leadership team:
  - Facilitate meaningful dialogue with site staff
  - Increase equity consciousness and articulate a shared equity imperative
  - Learn a change management framework and begin to create conditions for aligned action
  - Design a process for site-level dialogue, decision making, and action planning in service of school board priorities and a district equity imperative

### **Excerpt from Vision Plan Document**

#### **BACKGROUND**

*Upon joining District 97, Dr. Kelley embarked on a "listen and learn" tour to better understand the issues, strengths and challenges of the district and its stakeholders. One of the key priorities articulated by Dr. Kelley in the 100-day report (which included many of the findings from her tour) was to create a "clear, shared vision, with a sustained focus." An explicit principle was that the vision be co-constructed by students, parents/guardians, the community, teachers, school and district administrators, elected officials and the District 97 Board of Education. To that end, Dr. Kelley and the district have been committed to and intentional about creating opportunities to collaborate with all of the aforementioned stakeholders.*

*In January, 50 leaders from across the district participated in an interactive planning day that led to the creation of several six-word stories that communicated the vision for District 97 students' learning experiences. The district solicited community feedback on the "vision" stories as part of the vision planning work.*

*This work was the launching point for the community conversations and the formation of the Superintendent's Advisory Panel (Panel), which is comprised of a group of 33 stakeholders from across the district brought together to shepherd the District 97 vision planning process. Additionally, M2 Communications was engaged to help facilitate this process.*

*Between April 16 and April 30, M2 Communications conducted 13 community conversations and heard from 255 parents/guardians, community members, district staff members, teachers, administrators and students (current and alumni). Based on the analysis of these crucial conversations, Dr. Kelley's listen and learn tour, and the six-word stories, the Panel has developed two strategic priorities, or "big rocks," that reflect that work. These "big rocks" will provide District 97 with a map to move it closer to its vision for all of its students.*

*This vision planning document was then drafted and shared with the community. Stakeholders made comments on the document online and attended one of several town hall meetings hosted by Dr. Kelley. This document is being presented to the District 97 Board of Education and the administration as they set goals and develop action plans for the district.*

#### **ELEMENTS OF THE VISION**

*The Panel identified the elements of a vision that the Board of Education will use to develop a vision statement for the district. These elements, which are listed below, were arrived at through research conducted with the community (including the community conversations), as well as via deliberations by the Panel.*

*District 97 will...*

- *Be student focused*
- *Incorporate the perspectives and needs of students and teachers*
- *Engage and challenge students*
- *Support students to feel happy, respected and excited*
- *Provide equal opportunity for all students*
- *Develop critical thinking skills and support students as global citizens ready for our ever changing world*
- *Support students to find their passion and develop a lifelong love of learning*
- *Meet the diverse needs of all students*
- *Support students to develop tolerance, empathy and care for each other and the world*
- *Engage the entire community in support of our schools and each and every student*

### **CLEAR, FOCUSED VISION**

*There was clear consensus throughout the community conversations, as well as within the Panel's deliberations, that the district's primary and immediate focus should be to:*

*Create a positive learning environment for all District 97 students that is equitable, inclusive and focused on the whole child.*

### **FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION**

**Assess.** *Begin tackling the “big rocks” by assessing the work the district is doing in each area. This assessment would include performing an audit that covers what initiatives the district has in place, how those initiatives are working and for whom they are intended, as well as the identification of the gaps between what the district is currently doing and the needs to be addressed.*

**Plan.** *Each “big rock” will require the development and implementation of a thoughtful process that is inclusive of key stakeholders and attentive to the shared vision and values of the district (outlined above). Developing a comprehensive and thoughtful plan is critical for garnering buy in from all stakeholders and facilitating smooth implementation. This plan should include embedded accountability that requires ongoing review to ensure the work is achieving the intended goals.*

**Implement.** *Begin implementing the actions for each “big rock,” being mindful of the shared vision and values of the district throughout the process.*

**Review/reflect/revise.** *As the work of each “big rock” is being implemented, there must be a system in place for reviewing, reflecting on and revising the work as necessary.*

**Communicate.** *Develop and implement a two-way communications plan for sharing all aspects of the work on an ongoing basis with stakeholders. By sharing each step of the process (plan, implementation, review/reflect/revise), stakeholders will be updated and informed about the status of the goals and work, and have a mechanism for offering feedback. This will also help facilitate and foster stakeholder knowledge, input and buy-in.*