



BLAINE COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT

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Superintendent GwenCarol Holmes, Ed. D.

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Dear Colleagues,

The energy around ensuring all students are inspired and engaged at school is palpable. As we share our passions and interests with students, relationships are built. As we inquire about students' passions and interests, relationships are built. As we work together as teams across departments and schools to help inspire our students, relationships are built. I can't begin to express how grateful I am to each and every one of you for putting yourself out there, for reviewing your work one more time to assess if students will be inspired and engaged, and for taking risks to try and hook our students on the thrill of learning.

As we develop even deeper relationships with our students and they see the incredible support provided to them, we also need to ensure we are exhibiting high expectations for them as well. We need to push and support them to ensure they are reading appropriate level text. We need to push and support them to ensure they are challenging themselves with higher level mathematics and sciences. We need to push and support them to ensure they are challenging themselves with a wide array of disciplines. This takes all of us from Pre-Kindergarten through grade 12 in every school and district department.

Regardless of what our students select to pursue as careers, further education, and/or passions after they leave us, it is critical that they leave us educated and empowered to do whatever they choose in their different stages of life. The standard must include that all students are encouraged to complete at least Algebra II and an advanced science class. These courses are the current-day gatekeepers, even for students who elect not to go on to college. Look at the chart from a recent report by the Center for Public Education, [*The Path Least Taken II: Preparing Non-College Goers for Success*](#).

As a district and as individual schools we have huge achievement gaps between subgroups of students. A recent review of our ISAT 2.0 scores from this past spring brings that tough fact to the forefront. There are lots of factors that impact this gap over which we have no control. However, one factor over which we DO have control is Opportunity to Learn (OTL). OTL is the proposition that a student's ability to learn a subject is dependent on whether and for how long they are exposed to it in school. If students are not exposed to and supported in reading complex grade level text, they never will learn it. If students are not exposed to and supported in advanced mathematics they never will learn it. If students are not exposed to and supported in advanced science they never will learn it. If students are not exposed to and supported in a wide array of disciplines they will be very limited.

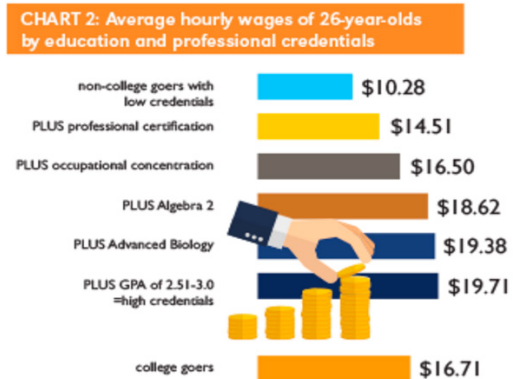
We are the ones who must insist that students are exposed to and supported so that they are literate in complex grade level text, advanced mathematics, advanced science, and a wide array of disciplines. We control these variables. A recent review of the research on the mighty power schools have to impact the Opportunity to Learn for all students, including those currently at the bottom end of the gap, is [*The Role of Schooling in Perpetuating Educational Inequality: An International Perspective*](#).

Our strategic plan takes dead aim at eradicating inequality by aspiring to ensure every student is inspired, engaged, educated, and empowered. We can do this. Let's get it done. Let's insist all of our children have whatever they need to succeed at high levels. Our children are depending on us.

With gratitude,


GwenCarol

P.S. Congratulations to the Fourth and Fifth Grade teachers who started and finished their grade level curriculum maps on October 1 and 2. Wow!!! These teachers are now working on individual school units. Curriculum writing for grades 4 and 5 will be completed by the end of this year. Thank you very much.



High school preparation can make a big difference for non-college goers, especially when combined with certification.

Each added credential increases average wages to the point that non-college goers with high credentials out earn the average college goer.

Our mission is to inspire, engage, educate and empower every student.