

Dear families,

In our October 9 newsletter, I shared our School Improvement Goals for 2009-10. Each school in Boulder Valley is required to set goals in three areas – equity, achievement, and climate. These goals are formulated after a committee of teachers and parents analyze school data and determine a plan to increase student achievement and improve the climate of our school.

This month, I will discuss the strategies that we are employing to meet these ambitious goals. First, the three goals we have set that will guide our work this year:

Equity: *The median male student at Douglass Elementary School will grow at a rate greater than 66% of his peers statewide in Reading by 2010 as measured by the 2010 CSAP Reading Assessments, while maintaining the high growth level of girls at Douglass Elementary.*

Achievement: *Male students at Douglass Elementary School will increase their achievement on the CSAP Writing Assessment from a weighted index score of 99 in 2009 to 104 by 2010, while maintaining the high achievement level of girls at Douglass Elementary.*

Climate: *Survey results in 2010 will meet or exceed the district favorable response rate on the following questions: 5 (My teachers like me); 12 (I have not been called hurtful names or made fun of); 17 (Adults help if they see someone being bullied); 19 (I have not been bullied at school this year); and 42 (I feel safe riding the bus to and from school).*

Our work on these goals began before students even started this fall. We used a new literacy assessment tool, the DRA2, to gather information about students' reading abilities. We are also using a new Curriculum Essentials Document that was developed by the district that we believe will help us be more consistent about both what is taught by teachers and learned by students at each grade level. We have also collaborated with two other elementary schools in Boulder Valley that are similar to Douglass in order to gain insights from educators beyond our building.

Our teachers have begun a study on the book *Strategies for Teaching Boys & Girls*. After reading selected chapters, we devote a portion of a staff meeting discussing strategies that will be most effective for our students. In October, we discussed ways to incorporate movement in the curriculum. Research over the past 20 years supports the merits of letting students move around as they learned – achievement and behavior improves when physical activity is integrated helpfully in the school day.

This month, we've explored tools to support our visual learners. Again, research demonstrates that the more teachers combine visual aids with verbal directions, the more children's brains are engaged. We will use graphic organizers in new ways as well as encourage the use of other non-linguistic representations along with words.

With the support of our PTO, we were able to purchase Comprehension Toolkits for students in grades 1 through 5. These materials will support the in-depth understanding of text that our students will be expected to demonstrate on our literacy assessments. We are also

identifying students who are behind grade level and monitoring their progress on regular intervals. I'm working closely with teachers as they work to meet the needs of these and all students.

To address our climate goal, our system of Positive Behavior Support has been implemented throughout the school day – on the school bus, on the playground, in the classroom, in the hallways, in the cafeteria, and even in the bathrooms! Our teachers are taking great care to notice the things our students are doing right – and thanks to our PTO, we are able to have monthly drawings of prizes for students who exemplify safety, respect, and responsibility.

I will continue to update Douglass families throughout the year about our school goals, and I encourage you to ask questions about our goals and strategies. As always, I appreciate the terrific support of our parent community – that combined with the excellent teaching taking place in every classroom will help us reach these goals.

Your principal,

Jon Wolfer