

From the Principal's Desk...

Thanks to the voters in Boulder Valley for passing Mill Levy 3A this week! This will make a large and important difference moving forward this winter and spring – last spring's budget cut will now be paid for, with additional support to forestall future state budget cuts. There will also be news coming to you that will benefit the community at Douglass Elementary in future newsletters, directly related to this week's successful election. So thank you to all of you who took the time to learn about the issues in the election and then voted to support public education in our community.

Every year, we develop a school improvement plan. New this year, the Colorado Department of Education has used test scores, plus graduation and dropout rates for high schools, to categorize the kinds of plans schools need to develop. From highest to lowest levels of school performance, plan categories are Performance, Improvement, Priority Improvement, or Turnaround. Our recent test scores were high enough that our plan type will be a Performance plan. This means that no additional state oversight of our planning process will be required.

In early December, the Colorado Department of Education will publish full results in a new report called a "school performance framework." For now, what has been published is a summary of how well results met state expectations with regard to overall academic achievement, academic growth, gaps in academic growth among different groups of students and (for high schools only) postsecondary and workforce readiness. For anyone who is interested, details of calculations used to assign plan types and examples of school performance frameworks are available at <http://www.schoolview.org/PerformanceFrameworks.asp>

If you have any questions about our school's progress or our plan to improve over time, I invite you to talk with your child's teacher or to give me a call. We appreciate your continued support of our school and your contributions to making our school the best place for students to learn.

Last week, I shared some alarming research with our teachers about the link between school attendance early in a student's educational career, and success or failure in middle and high school. Researchers examined the school records of students who have dropped out of school, and learned that poor attendance patterns developed early – even at schools with similar demographics to Douglass Elementary.

I'd like to remind parents of the importance of attending school every day. We only have school scheduled for students 175 days each school year. I believe that if we adult model excellent attendance, it will rub off on our students. But if we model scheduling frequent vacations during the school year, or taking a Friday off to create a long weekend, students see and learn from that as well – and in just a few years, they make their own decisions about whether or not they need to attend school that day.

As a district and a school, we are continuing to be diligent in monitoring student attendance – because we see the outcomes now and in the future. I encourage you to do your part as well, helping us teach the importance of school attendance as early as possible.

We also discussed tardiness to school. As I mentioned in last month's newsletter, one of our primary goals as a school this year is improving our school climate by focusing on our bully-prevention efforts. One of our strategies in bully prevention is regular classroom meetings where teachers and students can bring forth safety concerns at school or on the bus in a problem-solving area where all in the classroom can help.

These classroom meetings typically occur at the start of the school day. If your children are late, even by just a couple of minutes, they have probably missed some important conversation about the ways their classmates feel that their school can be a safer place. It's critical for our kids to be at school every day – on time – so that they don't miss a minute of either this vital time as a classroom community or the excellent instruction that takes place in each classroom.

Thanks for all you do at home to support our work with your kids at school.

Your principal,
Jon Wolfer