



# **2017-2018** ANNUAL REPORT

SKOKIE / MORTON GROVE SCHOOL DISTRICT 69

## SUPERINTENDENT'S MESSAGE

### Planning for the Future



Dr. Margaret Clauson

Another successful school year is "in the books" for Skokie-Morton Grove District 69, in large part due to a laser-like focus on our strategic plan to guide our decisions and frame our continuous improvement. Our Classrooms First (CFC) partnership with District 219 has resulted in significant enhancements to our Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) programming. Through the collaboration with CFC, we have implemented new writing materials and are preparing to implement new reading materials during the next school year. Those are just a few of the exciting initiatives that include:

**Community Schools:** Three work groups (Health & Wellness, Expanded Learning Opportunities and Family & Community Engagement) comprised of parents, staff and partners have identified specific goals for 2018-19 as part of our Community Schools strategy. More information is contained in this Annual Report.

**Behavior Management Learning Team (BMLT):** The BMLT team comprised of staff, Board and parents was charged with establishing the vision, guiding principles and recommenda-

tions for supporting student behavior. The team evaluated existing policies and procedures, compliance with state and federal law, positive behavior supports and age-appropriate discipline. Each building established an implementation team (Foundations) to develop efficient data-collection and analysis methods, build uniform referral systems, improve communication and expand staff skills in effective supervision and positive behavior supports.

**Early Childhood:** In partnership with Infant Welfare Society of Evanston (IWSE), District 69 hosted Erikson Institute Executive Director Dr. Geoff Nagle in April. The event attracted more than 100 community leaders. Dr. Nagle's presentation titled "The First 1,100 Days Last Forever" highlighted the importance of early learning experiences and the lifetime impact of those experiences. District 69 and IWSE each received funding from the state to provide home visiting programs for families with children under age 3, as well as to expand District 69's preschool program to serve more students. The District, along with District 73.5, also is excited to be a part of an Erikson Institute community-wide study focused on the well-being of our youngest citizens.

District 69's successes are shared by all in the community and reflect directly on our incredibly supportive community.

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

### Excitement in District 69



Steve Dembo

If you have stepped inside a Skokie-Morton Grove District 69 school building this year, you may have noticed a buzz in the air. While every year brings new changes and evolution, the 2017-2018 school year was truly a noteworthy one in many ways. Physically, the new construction has dramatically expanded our learning spaces. Programmatically, there have been positive, quantifiable results coming directly from the work done by our research teams and committees. Culturally, the district has partnered with neighboring districts and community organizations to meet the needs of our uniquely diverse population.

In addition to those achievements, I am excited about each of the following:

- **Facilities** - The first phase of construction is complete with the new spaces already impacting our students' experiences. The new gym at Edison has already served as home for several concerts and special events, and is loved by students. Madison has added five much needed new classrooms, an exciting new playground, new meeting spaces and offices for district staff.

- **Classrooms First (CFC)** - Our CFC partnership with District 219 is in the fourth year of supporting curriculum alignment from kindergarten through high school. The work put in by both District 69 staff and our partners in District 219 has yielded exceptional results. Already Lincoln graduates are achieving at higher levels in both math and science at Niles West, details of which are included in this newsletter.

- **Robotics** - Lincoln students are embracing the future in so many ways, showcased in particular by the achievements of our robotics team this year. In addition to winning first place at a regional Vex robotics tournament and second place at the state tournament, Lincoln hosted the first robotics tournament for Niles Township elementary and middle schools.



As enjoyable as it is to look back and celebrate our achievements, what excites me the most is that each of those achievements are laying the groundwork for even greater things to come. Our dedicated staff and administration have made District 69 the standard of future-forward learning.

## Classrooms First Partnership Earns Results

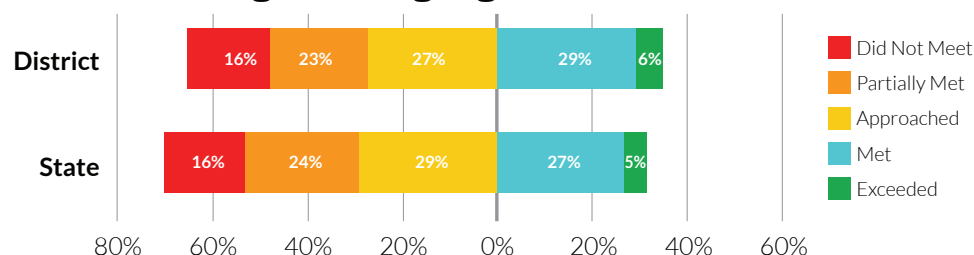
A unique initiative between Skokie-Morton Grove District 69, Golf Elementary District 67 and Niles Township High School District 219 titled Classrooms First (CFC) continues to impact student learning and success. The goal of CFC is to ensure that all students from kindergarten through 12th grade benefit from a guaranteed and viable common curriculum and assessment program that properly prepares them for high school and college. The partnership helps ensure consistency and collaboration between the elementary districts and the high school district.

Dr. Steven Shadel, the CFC Executive Director, recently provided the Board of Education with an update on the success of the program for District 69 students who are now in high school. The first years of the partnership focused on Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM). The data shows significant gains in math and science as students transition to high school:

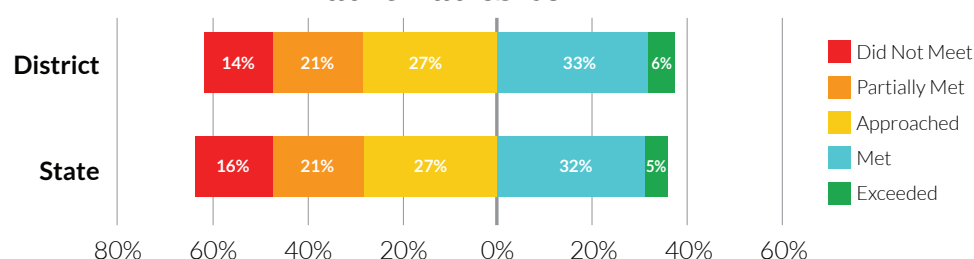
- The number of District 69 freshmen failing math has fallen from 14% to 4% in the past two years.
- The number of District 69 freshmen failing science has fallen from 12% to 7% in the past two years.
- The number of District 69 freshmen earning a C or better in math has jumped from 67% to 85% in the past two years.
- The number of District 69 freshmen earning a C or better in science has jumped from 68% to 73% in the past two years.

The data demonstrates that District 69 students are benefitting from the CFC partnership and are overall more prepared for high school coursework than they have been in previous years. The results are particularly remarkable because these students have only benefited from one to two years of revised curriculum and instruction.

### English Language Arts 2017



### Mathematics 2017



## District 69 Experiences Growth in Mathematics

The Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) exams given to all Illinois public school students, starting in 3rd grade, are designed to assess how students are progressing toward proficiency standards and college and career readiness.

Rather than multiple choice questions, the computer-based PARCC exams in math and English language arts require students to demonstrate skills and abilities by writing essays and short responses, solving real world challenges and analyzing complex text.

The percentage of students in Skokie-Morton Grove District 69 either meeting or exceeding state standards in both math and English language arts is again above the state average. In English language arts, 35% of District 69 students are meeting or exceeding the performance level set by the state. In math, 39% are meeting or exceeding.

"District level PARCC data has consistently mirrored the statewide PARCC performance," says Assistant Superintendent of Academics Megan Aseltine. "PARCC provides useful feedback on overall programming as opposed to individual student growth. Over the past three years, we have observed steady improvement in the area of mathematics as measured by PARCC. We believe this is reflective of the instructional changes we have made over the past four years."

"In partnership with D219 (CFC), our teachers and administrators have analyzed the PARCC data along with other district performance data. We have evaluated our current curricular materials and determined that the District needs to adopt new ELA instructional materials. Beginning this fall, we will be devoting resources to providing specific professional development in the area of ELA and to support the implementation of new ELA instructional materials" she says.



# Impacting Student Lives Through Community Connections

Imagine all the available resources within the Skokie and Morton Grove communities. The knowledge, skills and abilities of the people and organizations is remarkable. Now imagine harnessing those resources with a focus on helping students succeed. That is exactly what District 69 is doing through its Community Schools initiative.

“A community school is a set of partnerships between the school and community,” says Community Schools Resource Coordinator Sarah Rankin. “It is an integrated approach focused on expanded learning opportunities, health and wellness, and family engagement. We feel these pillars build the foundation for student academic success, stronger families and healthier communities.”

She says that by using the schools as “hubs,” community schools bring together a variety of partners to offer a range of resources and opportunities for children, families and the community as a whole. “The analogy I like to use when explaining community schools is comparing a landline phone to a smartphone. In a conventional school (landline) model, schools provide a single and binary purpose, in other words, school is where teachers teach and students learn. The lights of the school turn on when students arrive and turn off after students are

dismissed. However, a community school resembles a smart phone, where the phone itself represents the school and the apps on the phone are the array of supports provided by community partners that students and families can access at their school.”

Two years ago, the Community School Action Team (CSAT) was formed and that group developed a vision, guiding principles, operating structure and focus areas to guide the work during the 2016-17 school year. The group included approximately 15 people representing administration, Board of Education, community partners, staff, parents and Youth & Opportunity United, Inc. (Y.O.U.) representatives.

CSAT has built a two-tiered structure this year that includes a steering committee and work groups. “The steering committee keeps an eye on the ‘big picture’ items such as sustainability, responsiveness to community need and coordination of programs and partners,” says Superintendent Dr. Margaret Clauson. “The work groups focus on partnership development, prioritizing and creating goals/initiatives. This structure allows for a variety of stakeholders to come together in shared decision-making, seeking opportunities to leverage re-



sources through a collective impact perspective. The community school strategy is the ultimate expression of the whole being greater than the parts.”

Ultimately, the two-tiered Community Schools approach is designed to benefit students and families. “Students come to school with a wide range of capacities and challenges,” Rankin says. “By aligning our school districts resources with the resources of the community, we can ensure that all students’ developmental needs are met. With our strong partnerships, our community schools are able to deliver a more integrated approach to student and family development.

Finally, because of our partnerships with our local businesses, we are able to support academic and non-academic needs to support student success.

Helping families to support their children is integral in the community school model. Families engaged in their school community can have their voices, thoughts and ideas heard. “We know that if our families are connected to their child’s school, there is a direct correlation to positive student outcomes,” Rankin says.

“In the Community School model, there is an intentional focus on supporting all parents in sharing their voice to advocate for their children. Adult English as a Second Language classes, Parent Mentor programs and Parent Leadership training are among several programs designed to help parents in gaining the necessary skills to more actively engage in our schools and community,” continues Rankin.

One of the many highlights this past year that showcased the collaboration of teachers and parents as part of this initiative was the Family Cultural Night Potluck. The Parent Leaders Uniting Schools (PLUS) parent organization and teachers came together to plan and execute the successful evening. There were more than 85 families representing more than 250 people in attendance for an evening of family folk dancing, culturally relevant activities and a potluck featuring dishes from around the world.

Subia Javed is a mother of two, including an incoming 8th grader at Lincoln. She set a personal goal to become more involved in her children’s education so she joined the parent mentor program that is hosted by the Skokie ELL Parent Center.

“My life totally changed after those trainings and workshops,” she says. “I became a very active member of our district and made friends with people from other cultures and now feel very comfortable planning and attending events.”

School board member and CSAT representative Felicia Holtz said she greatly values the diversity of cultures and languages in the District, and wants to ensure that all families feel welcome in the school environment and all families are represented at the many school events offered throughout the year.

“The community school model is an active effort to weave together all the different cultures and languages to make a stronger community,” she says. Holtz cites the partnership with Y.O.U. as the jumpstart that created supports for families in many areas like free physical examinations, providing Thanksgiving dinners to families, connecting families to the district and providing after school programming.

“By putting District 69 schools at the center of the community, we want to create a vibrant and empow-

ering experience for children and their families ... all of our families,” Holtz says. “While maintaining individual identity, we use the strengths everyone has to offer in order to increase learning and achieve equity.



# Madison After School Program Supports Early Learners



Kindergarten and first-grade students at Madison School who attend Supporting Literacy & Math (SLAM) class after-school on Tuesdays and Thursdays describe the experience as “fun” and “exciting.” However, there is a lot more happening than just fun and games. The students are part of an innovative program supported by a private foundation to help boost their school performance.

SLAM was created to provide additional support in reading and math to at-risk early learners, particularly those in lower-income families. SLAM currently serves Madison as well as a school in the Chicago Public Schools. The program is a unique after school program for a number of reasons according to Co-Founder, Lead Teacher and SLAM Executive Director Lisbeth Stone, who founded SLAM along with Jeannine Cleary.

“SLAM is not only on-site in a school but our program manager, lead teachers and many of our assistants work at Madison during the school day,” Stone says. “We are tapping into the community school approach where we are able to understand the needs of the school and deliver an academic experience that supports what they are learning during the day.”

She says SLAM was designed for students to work in small groups so they can practice critical skills such as



taking turns, listening and following directions, in addition to dealing with disappointment when things don’t go the way they want. “These have been called ‘soft skills’ in education, but many are now recognizing that these skills are critical to being successful in school and life,” Stone says.

Stone adds that SLAM also improves core academic skills. “There are many after school programs that are trying to help students,” she says. “Many of these programs are either reading based or STEM based. Our program’s aim is to support the excellent instruction that takes place during the school day at Madison and provide an additional boost of practice twice a week in



reading and math. It is our hope we deliver a curriculum that is so engaging and fun students don't realize SLAM is really a continuation of their school day!"

Teachers at Madison sing the praises of the program as a support to the day-to-day classroom learning. "Many of our SLAM students are the ones who need an extra boost to access or master grade level skills," says 2nd Grade Teacher Allie Underwood. "One of our goals is for students to transfer the skills they are learning at SLAM into their classroom, school day and everyday life."

Underwood shares that SLAM is currently collaborating with the data teams and teachers at Madison School. The goal of the collaboration is to ensure that the program is fully integrated with what happens during the school day. SLAM teachers share information and observations with the classroom teacher in order to help inform the child's school day programming.

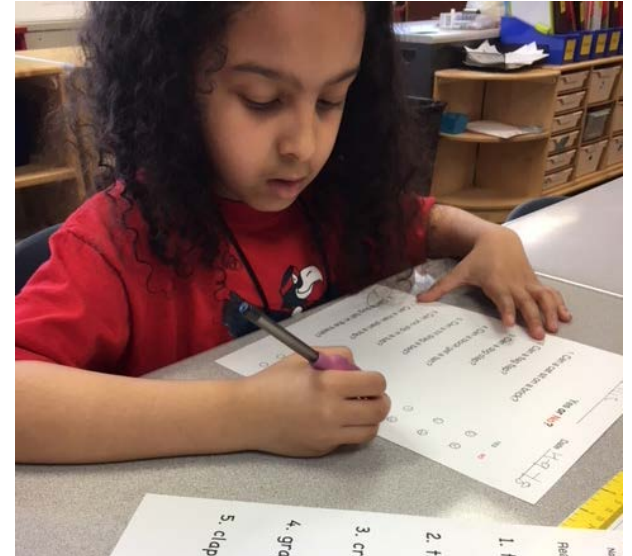
She says the connection led to a remarkable moment. "There was a SLAM student who was having an especially difficult day in another teacher's classroom and instead of the situation escalating, I was able to pull the student out of class and we ate lunch together," she says. "The student sat with me and calmed down rather quickly. I attribute this to the deep relationship we had

built during our time together at SLAM. It was exciting to see that SLAM has helped this student build trusting relationships across the building."

"Not only has this program been an amazing academic and social-emotional experience for our students, but I have grown as an educator because of SLAM," Underwood says. "The training, collaboration and exploration of curriculum through SLAM has impacted my 2nd grade classroom. I love incorporating things we use at SLAM into my classroom."

Strong home-to-school connections are extremely important to the program. "SLAM focuses on parents and the critical role they play in supporting the skills learned in the program," Stone says. "Therefore, one of the goals is to provide supports for parents and guardians at home, which includes sending home math games, books and monthly newsletters."

Every parent attended the SLAM open house indicating the high level of support and involvement from our families. "We were thrilled to have all of our parents and guardians attend the Open House. The SLAM program is an important priority for them. The home-school connection is so important to the success of students," Underwood says.



# New State Funding Formula Means Minor Revenue Gain for District 69

Effective for the 2017-18 school year, the State of Illinois implemented a new Evidence Based Funding (EBF) formula for schools that is designed to distribute additional state monies in a more equitable or needs-based manner. For Skokie-Morton Grove District 69, state funds make up approximately 10% of the overall revenue. The vast majority of revenue comes from local property taxes.

Under the EBF, all school districts throughout the state minimally received the same state funding amount as

they did in the 2016-17 school year. The additional state funds were distributed based on an adequate funding target calculation.

The adequate funding target is determined for each school district based on multiple factors, including the needs of students. Some of the factors used by the formula include the number of low income, English language learners and special education students. This adequate funding target is then compared to the District's current resources or "capacity" to generate the

needed funds to determine whether or not the state will provide additional funding to the district.

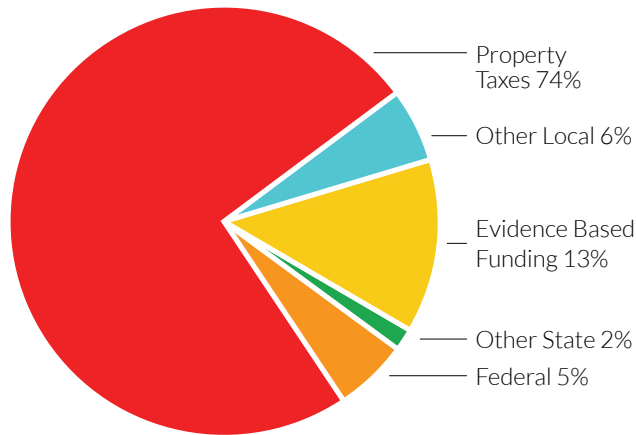
A district at 100% adequacy indicates that the current resources are sufficient to adequately support the needs of students. EBF funds were distributed first to districts with the lowest percentages (or highest need). District 69's adequacy target was calculated at 82% for the 2017-18 school year. Based upon this adequacy figure, the EBF formula was used to distribute \$350 million across the state in increased funding for



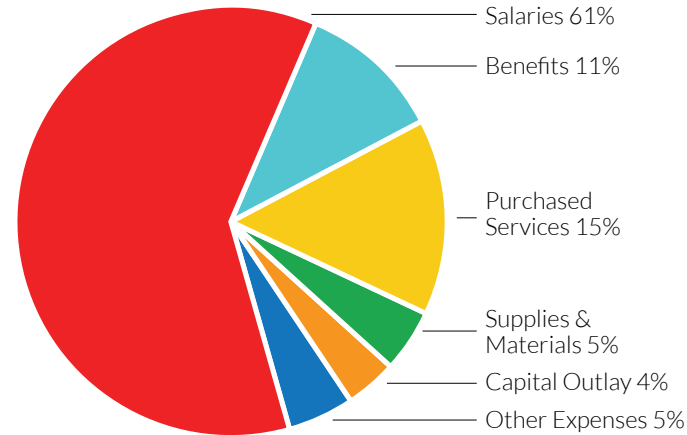
*A new playground at Madison is one of the many projects completed as part of a major facility upgrade underway within District 69.*



## Operating Revenue



## Operating Expenses



fiscal year 2018, resulting in approximately \$55,000 in additional state funds for District 69.

While the implementation of the new funding formula was a significant step in the right direction, education funding in Illinois is still heavily reliant on local property taxes as the primary funding source. In District 69 local property taxes represent 75% of the revenue to operate the school district.

“The state’s reliance on property taxes to support schools results in dramatic differences in tax rates and funding levels among school districts,” says Chief School Business Official Justin Attaway. “The largest driver of property tax rates is the total property value (Equalized Assessed Valuation - EAV) within the school district, and a lower EAV directly results in higher tax rates assessed by the county.”

District 69’s resources are also impacted by the Village of Skokie Tax Increment Financing (TIF) Districts. “Both of the TIF districts in Skokie lie within the District 69 boundaries and reduce the available EAV to support schools,” says Attaway.

Overall, a consistent goal for District 69 is to be fiscally conservative to ensure taxpayer funds are used wisely. District 69’s Operating Expense per Pupil is the lowest in Niles Township at \$14,012. The other Niles Township school districts range between \$14,195 and \$17,728. “The District works hard to ensure the most effective use of dollars and is proud of its efforts to contain costs,” says Attaway.

Through careful long-ranging planning, the District has been able to develop a sound financial plan that supports the capital needs defined in the Master Facil-

ity Plan. This Plan was the result of stakeholder input and community priorities to ensure that the District’s school buildings can adequately support the educational programs and services.

The District has prioritized resource reallocation and conservative spending practices to utilize its resources efficiently. “As we focus on the goals outlined in the strategic plan to enhance the educational experience of our students, the Board has remained focused on the sustainability of programs and services,” Superintendent Dr. Margaret Clauson says. “We continually monitor our finances to ensure that we can weather any storm and continue to provide a quality education program to our students.”

# Setting Teachers Up for Success Through Coaching

Teaching is one of the most complex careers and frequently introduces new methods and approaches to instruction. In order to provide students with a high quality educational experience each day, teachers need support. Therefore, Skokie-Morton Grove District 69 has implemented an instructional coaching program to provide teachers with the ongoing professional development they need to impact student learning.

“Highly successful athletes have coaches to help them remain at the top of their sport,” says Superintendent Dr. Margaret Clauson. “Additionally, professionals across a wide range of business and industry have engaged with coaches to improve their personal performance and that of their companies. That is the same concept here in District 69. Our instructional coaches are helping teachers identify what is important and set goals for improvement to remain competitive and innovative.”



Two years ago, District 69 considered ways in which it could sustain the progress being made in the areas of math and literacy through the Classrooms First (CFC) partnership. The success of the program requires continued support to sustain the growth in student achievement.

“We knew that to keep that momentum going, it would be important to begin building in-house capacity to support curriculum development and implementation,” says Superintendent Clauson. “By building an instructional coaching program, teachers now can receive the support needed to sustain the changes we are putting in place.”

District 69 instructional coaches meet frequently with the CFC directors to collaboratively plan for professional development activities related to new curriculum initiatives. Working together with the directors, instructional coaches help identify areas of teacher need related to the implementation plan and develop professional learning sessions that address those needs.

“One of the great benefits of a coaching program is that in the days and weeks that follow such learning



sessions, teachers can follow up with the coach as they begin to implement new practices and skills in their classrooms,” says Instructional Coach Louis Kotvis.

One of the major advantages of having district staff members dedicated to providing ongoing professional development as instructional coaches is that they are available and accessible to teachers at the times when they need help. Additionally, they are knowledgeable about curriculum content and instructional best practices in District 69. This all adds up to improved student learning.

“Whether it is providing opportunities to learn about new curriculum initiatives or best practices for instruction or meeting with individual teachers to address a personal professional goal for improvement, coaches know that teachers who continuously learn and apply new knowledge and skills effectively will have a positive impact on their students and schools,” says Instructional Coach Nicole Coy.



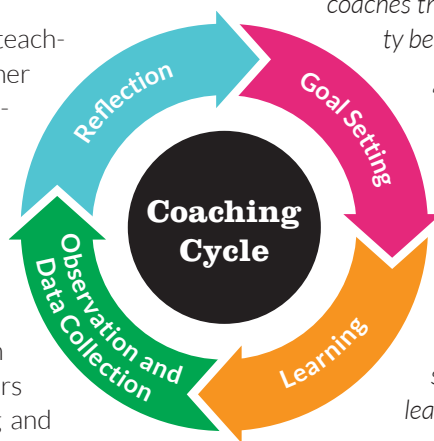
The District 69 coaches are guided by a framework for their work with teachers. This cycle allows for continuous professional improvement and follows a partnership approach between the teacher(s) and coach. Coaching can occur on an individual basis or in small groups.

When working with individual teachers, a coach will help the teacher establish a goal and then together they engage in professional learning to increase understanding of the topic or skill essential to the goal. As the teacher begins to apply this new knowledge to their practice in their classroom with their students, the coach offers ongoing support by observing and collecting data which they then review together. In this reflection stage, the teacher and coach revisit the goal and make any necessary adjustments to continue the path to success for both the teacher and their students.

In the two years the District 69 coaching program has been in place, teachers are reporting

how coaching has supported them in their classrooms with their students and their professional practices in positive ways. A few of those testimonials (in summary) are below:

*"I've had the pleasure of working with our STEM coaches this year and believe this opportunity benefited our students as well as me."*



*"When I first began the coaching cycle with my coach, I was overwhelmed with wanting to try a variety of new comprehension strategies that I had been reading about. The knowledge I gained from the experience has definitely helped to provide my students with the best possible learning experience."*

*"I've had a really beneficial experience this year working with my coach and I've been thinking of it as analogous to working out ... I don't always want to go to the gym to meet with my trainer, but every time I do-I feel awesome and so much stronger. I'm definitely growing and getting better as a teacher."*

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