Superintendent's HOPE Note - September 2023

I have not failed. I've just found 10,000 ways that won't work. — Thomas Edison

Feedback Does Not Equal Failure

This summer, I was invited to attend the annual Education First (EF) Global Leadership Summit in Berlin, Germany, where learners worldwide met for three days to develop prototypes to improve environmental sustainability. Learners were assigned to cross-cultural teams to build their prototypes using Design Thinking. The winning prototype is being featured in the Nobel Museum for one year.

School leaders were asked to observe the groups as they moved through the process throughout the summit. Then, on the very last day, just 2 hours before teams would present their prototypes before a room of 1,000 learners, facilitators, and guests, school leaders were asked to listen to the 1-minute marketing pitches for 10 of the 50 groups and provide feedback.

Believe it or not, I was nervous about providing feedback at the eleventh hour, primarily because learners had spent three grueling days quickly getting to know each other, identifying their customers, developing and revising a customer-centric prototype, and preparing a 1-minute sales pitch to share with a room of 1,000. Given the time constraints, I expected my feedback would be met with pushback, counter-opinions, and excuses. However, every group thanked me for my feedback, immediately discussed whether they could make the adjustments in time, and some even adjusted their presentations to include my recommendations. I did not receive pushback, excuses, or attitude, only gratitude and genuine reflection.

Learners at the Global Summit did not view my feedback as their failure. Instead, they saw it as another data point, feedback they could use to improve! Feedback is not failure. When we teach learners that feedback is not punitive but an opportunity to grow, we position them to be resilient, innovative leaders who can adapt to the most novel and challenging settings.

Where in our system are we building resilience, innovation, and a growth mindset in our learners? Let's talk about it.

H.O.P.E ~ Our Strategic Initiatives for the 2023-2024 School

I shared key initiatives for the 23-24 school year on opening day. We utilize our Leadership Improvement Model and strategic planning process to drive overall improvement across the district.

This year's initiatives align with key actions within the district's Teaching and Learning Plan and our Strategic Plan.

Teaching and Learning (T&L)

- Provide professional development on diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) strategies to support learners
- Establish Tier 1 strategies within MTSS
- Provide professional development to improve strategies at Tier 1
- Establish an effective Advisory Model (K-12)
- Implement culturally responsive teaching strategies and practices that increase voice and ownership in all classrooms

Community Engagement

- Engage families using DEI approaches

Facilities, Business & Support Operations

- Reduce contracts that do not support T&L
- Increase grants that support T&L

Team Member Engagement

- Focus on retention, recruitment, and engagement with attention to diverse populations

Technology

- Build T&L suite within the HUB (curriculum, PD calendar, resources list, etc.)
- Develop a schedule for auditing and pruning HUB materials across CSFs

Health, Safety & Security

- Develop student and staff training on emergency protocols
- Provide training on emergency protocols for all support staff (food services, paras, building & grounds, custodians)

Piece of the Puzzle

Congratulations to Jennifer Renaldi at our Middle School. Ms. Renaldi has taken on many leadership tasks this year, including onboarding new staff, working positively to provide mentorship and professional development to these folks, and becoming a welcoming face to all new teachers at STMS! If you see Ms. Renaldi, please extend your thanks for making us all Hanna Proud!