



# Superintendent's Corner

A brief update from TPS superintendent Dr. Julie Ford



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It is hard to believe that the 2011-2012 school year is almost over. I have really enjoyed being a part of the Topeka Public Schools family and am excited to participate in graduation exercises this week. We have celebrated at our Distinguished Staff Reception and had a wonderful Topeka Public Schools Retirement Dinner. Let us remember that it takes EVERYONE to make this school district an effective place for students and their parents. Don't forget to thank a co-worker that you see going the extra mile to make a difference for students.

Some of our staff are ending their calendar while some of us will continue to work year round. Continue to take care of yourself by managing your health plan which includes exercise, healthy habits and enjoying some down time! I hope everyone will have a safe and productive summer!

This newsletter is always arranged around the four areas of our strategic plan: Student Performance, Teaching and Learning, Human Resources and Efficiency and Infrastructure.

## Student Performance

We are awaiting many decisions by Kansas State Department of Education (KSDE) around the waiver they requested for No Child Left Behind (NCLB). We do know that the 2010-2011 AYP targets will remain the goal, versus continue to rise to 100% of all students. Following are the targets that will be used:

### Reading:

K-8 schools 87.8%  
9-12 schools 86.0%  
Districts 86.0%

### Mathematics:

K-8 schools 86.7%  
9-12 schools 82.3 %  
Districts 82.3%

We are eagerly waiting to hear the outcome of the Kansas waiver negotiation as this could impact whether we are required to offer "Choice" and "SES". We also will know more about schools identified on improvement and district improvement status. We do know that Topeka Public Schools will not have any Tier I Schools (5 Title I Schools that have scored the lowest over 4 years) or Tier II Schools (15% of persistently lowest high schools over 4 years). We do anticipate some Tier III schools.

We are analyzing our current Kansas Assessment data. Trends we are seeing include a slight increase at high school level, relatively the same at middle school level and a decrease at elementary level. These scores will not be finalized for awhile. The root cause analysis is looking at everything from class size, staffing, support for teachers, expectations, resources, and more.

Our newly formed Topeka Public Schools Equity Council will focus on issues around equity associated with each area of our strategic plan, but especially student performance. We have to be willing to ask ourselves why are we not getting the results we want and what are we willing to do about it. You may find additional information about the Equity Council [here](#).

## Teaching and Learning

The Common Core is coming to Topeka Public Schools this summer! The curriculum teams will focus on Pre-K -12 Language Arts. There will also be some shifts beginning in math, but most of the math work will happen in the summer of 2013. This new process will be the focus of much of the professional development in Topeka Public Schools next year. We feel confident that some of the processes we have put in place (eg. performance assessments, inquiry day, instructional practices, collaboration, etc.) will help with this big transition.

I hope you will consider taking advantage of some of the excellent professional development being offered this summer by Topeka Public Schools.

## Human Resources

We continue to think about how to grow more leaders in Topeka Public Schools. This is an important goal for the goal around succession planning under Human Resources in our strategic plan. You may know that we have a Topeka Public Schools Minority Leadership Program and a K-State/Topeka Public Schools Leadership Program that are currently meeting and will continue next year.

Next year we will begin a TPS 501/101 Leadership Class. This leadership course is designed for professionals who already have earned a master's degree in building administration, curriculum, counseling or related content field and have a desire to learn more about building and district leadership roles. College credit will be available. Participants will be asked to complete a building or district leadership project and to attend 12 weekly information sessions led by TPS administrators and guest speakers.

The purpose will be to provide a comprehensive orientation regarding TPS policies and procedures as they relate to building and district leadership responsibilities. Would you like a chance to enhance your resume and learn more about the district that you work for? (If you would like more information, contact Angela Locke in TPS Communications Department, [alocke@topeka.k12.ks.us](mailto:alocke@topeka.k12.ks.us))

## Efficiency and Infrastructure

It is interesting we are beginning the last week of school and do not have a budget to operate this district for next year. This makes it difficult in many areas of the district including negotiations, planning improvements, hiring staff and other areas. Most businesses project at least two years out but school districts do not have that luxury. Please consider reflecting on how you, as a Kansas citizen, can become active to support ALL public schools, especially Topeka Public Schools.

Here is what we do know:

- We are finishing Year 2 in our Strategic Plan. This included closing several schools the last two years, demolishing old property, and re-purposing buildings. The good news is we are not anticipating closing any schools next year. Avondale East Elementary School will close this year and we know this is difficult for staff, parents, students and community members.
- Ross Elementary and Eisenhower Middle School will become a Music Signature School and State Street Elementary and Chase Middle School will become a Performing Arts Magnet. Thanks to our mild winter we do not foresee problems with having the new additions open this August. We are hiring staff and are anxious for these great opportunities for students to begin.
- Quincy Elementary School will be a Visual Arts Signature School thanks to a strong partnership with North Topeka Arts District and a 21st Century Grant.
- Scott Magnet School will become a dual language magnet (continuing to emphasize technology within the dual language theme). Moving from a dual language program to a dual language magnet school will take some time, but a comprehensive plan and Dual Language Handbook are being developed!

Again, thank you for what you do each and every day for the students and their families in Topeka Public Schools.

## Upcoming Events

Don't forget it is not too late to enter a golf team to play in the Topeka Public Schools Foundation Golf tournament June 1 at Firekeeper. I will be playing and I hope to see you there!

The Topeka Public Schools Foundation does so much for our students that this is a great opportunity to have some fun and support the Foundation. Click [here](#) for more information and registration materials.