

Honeywell Update- October 26, 2016

Good evening Highland Park, it's Dr. Taylor expanding on my October 13 Honeywell message about our schools' efforts to support the "whole child."

The first goal of Highland Park's Pathway to Excellence, the strategic plan that over 60 members of all different segments of our community developed starting June 2016 reads, "The district will ensure that curriculum and instruction supports the 'whole child.'" The whole child...what does this mean? The international organization widely respected as one of the top educational research and practice institutions in the world, the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) defined the whole child initiative as this, "[The] approach [that works] to transition from a focus on narrowly defined academic achievement to one that promotes the long-term development and success of all children."

Our strategic plan looks to promote that long-term development and success to which ASCD speaks. It compels us to take a hard look at the state of our children's mental health (see my October 13 message), the usefulness of homework (see my September 28 message), and the nature of teachers' relationships with their students (see my September 14 message). Changing times call for changing approaches to ensuring student success. The Highland Park of old has much to offer (many of our graduates have gone on to live very successful lives), and the district's strategic plan honors the best practices of the past (see the plan's Focus Areas 2, 3, and 4), but it is the first set of goals and action steps (Focus Area 1), the things that guide our community to supporting the whole child, that take into account the altered times in which we live.

The fact is that Highland Park and the world around us has changed. The high stakes, high pressure nature of education has the likely potential to erode our kids' growth as healthy, independent, strong, creative, and independent learners. Our Pathway to Excellence maintains the high academic standards and rigor that has been an essential ingredient of Highland Park's historic success but places a new emphasis on the long-term development of all of our kids (the other reality I have not discussed yet is that our district has for a long time underserved large sects of our student population).

Please take a moment to better understand the whole child initiative that frames Goal 1.1. of our plan by going to <http://www.ascd.org/whole-child.aspx>. I will talk about another aspect of our whole child efforts, the inclusion of restorative practices in Grades 2-12, in my November 9 Honeywell message to everyone.

For now, have a good night.

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