

Honeywell Update- September 14, 2016

We're back to school Highland Park. Dr. Taylor here to tell you that our year is very successfully up and running, and the Pathway to Excellence (our school district's strategic plan) is in full effect.

This is a pivotal year in our schools' growth. Highland Park is thinking differently about how our kids experience school and learning. Some might say our schools are in good enough shape so we should let well enough alone, but the 11 months I've spent getting to you know your kids, their teachers, all the great people who keep our schools running, and the culture of the Highland Park School District has made it abundantly clear to me that we've been in a "holding pattern" for years and years. While our local, regional, national, and even international community has gradually changed, Highland Park's Schools have remain stagnant in vast ways.

The first thing we have to do and that our Pathway to Excellence directs us to do, is to get better at fostering positive relationships with all of our students (especially those who haven't found their niche in our schools) so they embrace the day...so they walk in the building door enthusiastic to learn and knowing that their unique talents and different self-identities will be respected and cultivated. This will mean changing the culture...the way our kids and school personnel perceive the function of schools, teaching, and learning. It means for example that we will have to rethink the way we help kids, especially in the most challenging years of a child's maturity- the middle school years, who repeatedly come to school late or who rack up numbers and numbers of absences (more to come on this in two weeks).

I am not in the business of leading change in our schools for the sake of change. There are plenty of amazing things we do, and we'll continue these amazing things. But, Highland Park's schools have to catch up to the research-proven best practices we've neglected for a long time. You should really take time to read our strategic plan so you can better understand these best practices. Visit the Pathway to Excellence website by clicking the link on our district's main page or by going directly to Pathways at www.pathway.hpschools.net

My next message to you will be on September 28, and I promise to be more specific about the status of our strategic plan in subsequent Honeywells. For now, have a good night.