

January 16, 2009

Dear School Community,

In my letter to the school community last week I stated that the validation of our expenditures that comprise our budget must be transparent so we may make informed decisions. At that same time we introduced our vision for a 21st Century district. I stated that we are not asking for more money to do the same, we will be requesting level service dollars to do so much more. As a result, our district's 21st Century Vision process will take place through the prioritization of the educational program and by re-structuring within the budget as opposed to traditionally adding to the bottom line. This approach is fiscally responsible. In difficult financial times, this endeavor allows us to take a critical look at all available human resources.

The rationale and justification for such a vision is grounded and current in the latest educational research. Breaking Ranks (1996) stated that, a global economy leaves few places for Americans without adequate skills because the world is filled with those who will labor for wages for which few in this country could afford to work. Furthermore, in an ever-changing global environment, the best and highest quality of education is a necessity no longer reserved for the few, but demanded for all.

In order to meet the demands of the 21st Century employment market, we must expose our students to a diversity of destinations, making them aware of the tools each individual needs to pursue multiple options in a productive and independent work life. Author Daniel Pink put it succinctly when he stated that; "we need to prepare kids for their future, not our past."

Current economic downturns at the federal and state level may appear on the surface to jeopardize our opportunity to move the educational program forward. However, we have always led in this district by the adage that "we cannot wait another day in the life of a child." With that in mind, the Secretary of Education Paul Reville's comments are most appropriate. "We must seize the leadership opportunity inherent in a time like this – the opportunity to project a strong vision for the future of public education while making the tough decisions that will enable us to realize that vision."

Our Vision for a 21st Century District rests on the belief that all students have the natural ability to succeed at high levels and that it is our responsibility to find out how to nurture, develop and encourage each innate talent. Our children deserve nothing less.

Respectfully submitted,

Robert Baldwin Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools