

DISTRICT 202 COMMUNITY COLUMN

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October 2007

District 202 will publish its state report cards by the end of October.

This action is not (or at least, should not be) news. State law requires school districts to share the vital information contained in the state report card each year with their communities by October 31.

This is a valuable service performed on behalf of our taxpayers and parents who rightly want to know how we are doing in our work to help all of our students acquire the knowledge and master the skills that the state and federal governments say are necessary for success in life.

The media will report on the report cards because they are an important measure of our progress in meeting the state and federal learning standards. However (and perhaps, especially because of the media attention they typically receive) we must remember that the state report cards reflect only one perspective of both our work and our success.

It's a critical perspective to be sure, since our progress in meeting the state learning standards doubles as the measure of our compliance with the federal No Child Left Behind Act, but it's also a limited perspective that provides only a glimpse of everything happening in our classrooms and community. The state report cards reflect the scores of tests given last spring, and taken only once a year.

Indeed we would do a great disservice to our parents and taxpayers if we relied on only the state report cards to guide our instruction.

Thankfully, that is not the case in District 202, where we are working hard to create and implement local assessments to help us teach our students shape and reshape instruction better and faster and more effectively every day.

Among many initiatives under way to improve learning and teaching for all of our students, District 202 is creating a data-driven assessment system that will drastically improve the quality of instruction that we're able to provide to our students.

In the past, our teachers, like most teachers, relied on classroom assessments -- most of which were generated by an individual teacher. In a manner of speaking, these "local" assessments were too local -- seldom did they share these assessments with colleagues in the same building, much less from throughout the district.

Certainly these assessments gave individual teachers feedback on their students' performance. But they did not provide the school district with the information necessary to completely evaluate the overall effectiveness of our curriculum from a "systems perspective".

The local common assessments now being developed in District 202 are being written by teams of teachers, from across the school district, all with subject area expertise. They are a vital part

of our work to create a coordinated, articulated, and aligned curriculum across all grade levels and in all content areas.

A coordinated curriculum system, including common local assessments, is especially important in a district like ours where, because of our growth, students are often reassigned to new schools. An aligned teaching and testing system helps to ensure that all students will have the same learning opportunities, resources and supports no matter where they go to school.

To support our aligned curriculum initiative, District 202 has also implemented a system called TIE-Net. This program literally “ties together” the state learning standards, our curriculum, expected outcomes for each area of instruction, instructional resources and assessment data in one sophisticated, powerful teaching tool.

Given the high-stakes, politicized nature of public education today, we must be as sharp and targeted and efficient with our instruction as possible. TIE-Net truly helps us improve learning and teaching by showing us what students are learning and not learning, and helping us to address students’ needs almost immediately.

We’re very proud of the work we are doing to prepare learners for the future. We’re seeing strong results from our efforts, and, thanks to the hard work and dedication of our staff, students and families, we expect to do even better in the months and years to come.

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Plainfield Community Consolidated School District 202