

## DISTRICT 202 COMMUNITY COLUMN

By Dr. John Harper  
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You may have heard the saying, “It takes a village to raise a child.” The same can probably be said for educating a child.

We work together as a community to impart the love of learning to our children, teach the discipline and focus needed to succeed in the classroom and in life, and encourage them to exercise the gift of intellect and creativity.

Professional educators lead this vital mission every day, and do it very well.

This week (November 16-22, 2008) is the National Education Association’s 87<sup>th</sup> annual American Education Week.

We in District 202 likewise celebrate, honor and thank all of the classroom teachers, support staff members and administrators in our own schools who strive every day to help nearly 29,000 students learn more, learn better, achieve, grow and succeed.

They do this against incredible odds – working with children from every walk of life, every socioeconomic level, every high and low of knowledge and skills.

They do this despite language barriers; lists of state and federal education rules and mandates as long as your arm; inadequate funding; a society with shifting levels of appreciation for education; and, sometimes, even a lack of understanding on the part of citizens for what they face every day in our schools.

They do this not to get rich. Not to be famous. Not to be celebrated. Not even for the thoughtful little gifts those students occasionally give.

Rather, professional educators do what they do, because it is the right thing to do.

In a world that craves leadership, our schools are creating leaders. In communities that need vision, our schools are creating passionate, creative thinkers. At a time when we are searching for the “next big thing” that will make our lives more productive and comfortable, our schools are creating young minds with new ideas able to solve problems we haven’t even thought of yet.

And all of this, they do for the joy of being able to say that, in some small way, they helped make the world a better place.

In America, every child has the right to a free and appropriate public education. That is our legal obligation. It is certainly every child’s right to expect to be able to go to school, have access to learning materials and competent instruction, and get back home safely. But it is our opportunity and obligation as professional educators to do so much more than what the law merely requires.

Professional educators ensure that what we give our students equips them not just for the state and national tests they will take in the classroom, but for those they will face in life. Professional educators strive not for mere competence, but rather for excellence. For each and every child.

I am grateful for the professional educators we have in District 202 who take this vital task to heart. They are some of the very best in the business. Their leadership, thoughtfulness and dedication make our school district better for all of our students, every day.

Together, we are preparing learners for the future.

Dr. John Harper  
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