This week

On Monday, my family went to synagogue to observe Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year. On Rosh Hashanah (translated as the Head of the Year), we do a number of things. We reflect on the past year, we consider the decisions we’ve made (and the triumphs or regrets associated with those decisions), we think about our friendships and our families, and we think about the year ahead. There is an important component to the day, and that is the sounding of the shofar. The shofar is a ram’s horn and it is blasted like a trumpet. Used in ancient times to rally armies, every time I hear the shofar, I think of what it is awakening me to do - how is it calling me to action. Over the last 5 years, it has been an honor to serve as Columbia’s Superintendent. As I look back, I marvel at how much we’ve accomplished, and I look forward to the work we have ahead. So, as I write this, I am pausing for a moment and imagining the blowing of the shofar. I am imagining our collective call to action. I am thinking about our collective aspiration, our nested patterns, and our leaders’ learning work. I feel called to keep working to get children to school, keep them in class, and catch them up and extend them further. I remain committed to our equity and restorative practices work and our leaders leading that work. More than anything, as we have reached beyond the halfway point of our first trimester, I want you to know I remain committed to you and to Columbia’s children.

Have a great weekend!

The 50-Year Fight: Solutions For Closing The Achievement Gap

Last week I provided you with an article from The Washington Post examining the reason for high and low achievement scores of white, black and Hispanic students. This week, board member Teresa Maledy sent me the link to an audio series she heard on KBIA that studies solutions for closing the achievement gap. The series is broken down into four parts - 1) What Is The Achievement gap; 2) How We Learn; 3) The Knowledge Gap; and 4) School Integration. I encourage you to listen to this series when you can.

Parent University

At the end of September, we had our first Parent and Community University session. Please follow this link to hear our short presentation about what AEO means, updates on our rallying cry to improve reading instruction, and the AMAZING panel of district voices (student, administrator, teacher, and community - 9min mark). AEO - it's what CPS is all about.

Climate Survey (Dave Wilson)

The window for the annual Stakeholder Satisfaction Survey (i.e. Climate Survey) opens next week and continues through October 25th. All students in grades 5, 8, and 11 are slated to take the survey. Technology Services is pushing the link out to Classlink for these students and to the iPads of students in 5th and 8th grade.

Staff and parents will also be given the opportunity to complete the survey as well. For staff, the survey will be pushed out to Classlink and to the iPads of staff who have them. Michelle Baumstark’s office will send the link to parents. All surveys take less than 10 minutes to complete.
Report from Carla London
Our Juvenile Justice Group, comprised of principals, individuals from the juvenile office and the courts, our Student Support Coordinator, Student Services Supervisor, Director of Safety and Security, and Director of Assessment, Intervention, and Data, met this Wednesday for our monthly collaboration. Issues addressed included a better system of monitoring students who have been detained at JJC, who are scheduled to return to their building, as well as receiving a list of students currently under the supervision of the juvenile office so buildings know how best to provide needed supports. The juvenile office will coordinate with John White on providing that information. I also emphasized the impact Teen Court can have on altering students’ behavior and serve as a potential diversion from entry into the juvenile justice system and asked our middle school principals who are not currently using such a process to consider creating one as soon as possible.

Report from Jill Brown
Eliot Battle Elementary
This week, our school spotlight comes from Eliot Battle Elementary!

Each year Eliot Battle Elementary has Get the Scoop Night the first part of September. Get the Scoop Night is basically a “reverse” parent teacher conference where parents have the opportunity to meet with teachers and tell them all about their children. If parents have a difficult time getting the conversation started, teachers have some jumping off points to get the conversation going. In addition to hearing about the children from the parent’s point of view this year, we had all of our Reading AIMSweb testing completed and teachers shared student scores. Teachers gave an overview of the assessment results and talked to parents about setting goals for reading improvement that will be reviewed at parent teacher conferences in November.

Quotes from Teachers:

“Our team had the snapshot from AIMS printed out and we were able to show the parents the three main components we assessed. I was able to point out specific areas of strengths and weaknesses and provide suggestions for parents to support our work at home”

“Sharing data allowed us the opportunity to establish a foundation with parents on which we can build and share future learning”

“Sharing reading assessment data sparked questions from parents on how they can help at home”

September 30th Professional Development
This past Monday, our elementary team spent the day learning and sharing the work of SRG (Standards Referenced Grading) and they had time to work together as a team in their building. Having this day to pause and reflect on the learning taking place with our students is paramount to our success. We must take time to hone our craft, and these professional development days give us this opportunity. Thank you for helping us to prioritize time for teachers to collaborate and learn!

Report from Nickie Smith
Substitute Update
I wanted to provide a quick communication regarding our current substitute status. The Board approved last spring for our district to move to EduStaff. One of the main contributing factors were the concerns that repeatedly were brought forth to district personnel, building administrators, and board members regarding our previous sub vendor. Many months were spent looking at fill rates, conversations regarding improvements and next steps. The concerns grew and fill rates continued to decline without resolution. Our districts substitute vendor contract ended at the end of last year and
we bid out the process, per board policy. EduStaff was selected from the seven companies that responded to the bid.

Only around 100 subs converted over from our previous vendor. Much of this could be attributed to our previous vendor also serving other districts as well as other industries. This means that EduStaff is building their pool. The good news is that the pool continues to grow, and we are seeing rates move in the right direction. However, it also came with some learning lessons.

Lesson1:
Originally EduStaff required a rather in-depth screening process for applicants. This was to gauge the applicants background in education and classroom management. This is great in theory and in my opinion, needed. In reality, it created a lengthy process that saw many individuals quitting the application mid-way through.

Lesson 2:
Once individuals were hired, EduStaff required them to go through a rather extensive training. Again, this is great in practice. Let’s make sure that individuals know what is expected in the classroom as substitute teachers. However, for those that have education certification and have undergone courses at the university level to train to be a professional teaching staff member, this seemed redundant. Especially to our retirees that have served our district for years with loyal and unwavering support to our students.

Resolutions:
We have asked EduStaff to discontinue their applicant screener questionnaire during the application process. We will revisit reinstituting in a year when our pool is built. Secondly, we have asked EduStaff to discontinue the required training videos of “how to be a substitute teacher,” to those individuals that currently possess a teaching certification. Additionally, our HR office will be contacting retirees by mail to notify them of the changes, in the event that they delayed their onboarding with EduStaff due to these two issues/lessons. Furthermore, we will be paying our subs more this year. They will receive $85/day for teaching and $11/hr. for clerical/para positions. The substitutes will also continue to be billed at ½ day or full-day rates for our teaching positions. EduStaff has also been offering hiring incentives to certain individuals that switched from our previous vendor, as well as radio broadcasts and other forms of advertisements to attract applicants.

I don’t offer all of this information to dismiss the concerns currently, or even downplay the efforts of every single individual in the buildings. I know that everyone is doing what they can to support our kids. We are all pulling together during this time with knowledge that there will be a reprieve. Recently, I have addressed both secondary and elementary principals to receive feedback on possible other options. All of their ideas are being considered. We may have to review past practices of how we schedule and address mid-year PD and other creative ideas. If you have an idea, we are open to it. I encourage solutions, as this is an important issue for all of us. The reality is that there is a teacher shortage nationwide. The reality is that there is a substitute shortage nationwide. These are all conversations to review.

I want these positions to fill. If buildings and staff are happy with fill rates, it makes my life much, much more enjoyable. Bottomline, if all positions are 100% filled, our students get the support they need in the classroom.

Report from Jen Rukstad

Seal of BiLiteracy
Suzanne Yonke, World Languages Coordinator, has compiled some data from last year and this year to define the number of students who have received, or are working to achieve, the Seal of BiLiteracy. Click [here](#) for the 2018/19 data. Right now in 2019/20, there are 484 students who are eligible for the Seal of BiLiteracy and 57 students are signed up to complete their ICC projects by November 18th.
(That’s already twice as many as signed up last year!) There are two more opportunities for students to complete the project and participate in the proficiency testing.

Suzanne will soon have a breakdown of the data into different categories, such as languages, types of proficiency tests and types of speakers (native English, ELL, heritage speaker).

**Report from Randy Gooch**
The fall round of Facility Condition Audits are scheduled for the week of Oct 14 and Oct 28.

**Report from Dr. Arla Monroe** (IT Director)

**District Technology Committee Meetings**
The District Technology Committee meetings are slated to begin on October 7th. The defined focus of the committee: During the 2019-2020 school year the district technology committee will be focused on the district-wide technology plan for 2020-2024. If you would like to be a part of the plan creation, we will have our first meeting on October 7th at 4:15 in the Lower Level Conference Room Aslin Building.

**Tentative Agenda**

**Information Items**

- District Technology Plan
- Trusted Learning Environment information
  - CPS Form ---Checklist for digital resources
- Technology Department Updates

**Discussion Items**

- District technology plan
  - Needs assessment?
  - Sub committees
  - Pillars/focus areas
  - Review/alignment of Technology plan to District CSIP

**Action Items**

- Meeting Cadence how often do we as a technology committee meet?
- Timelines for technology plan

*Adjourn by 5:30 pm*

**Upcoming Dates**

October 4: Wall of Honor Dedication at Battle High School, 5:30 p.m.

October 9: Finance Committee Meeting, 4:30 p.m., Aslin Training Room
October 10: Leadership Council, 7:30 a.m., Aslin Board/Training Rooms

October 14: Board of Education Executive (Closed) Session, 5:00 p.m., Kitchen Conference Room
October 14: Board of Education Regular Session, 6:30 p.m., Aslin Board Room
October 15: CPS Foundation Hall of Leaders, 5:00 p.m., Stephens College
October 16: Policy Committee Meeting, 7:30 a.m., Aslin Training Room
October 18: CCCCJ Joint Meeting, 8:00 a.m., City of Columbia

October 24: Board of Education Work Session, 7:30 a.m., Board Room
October 25: MAC Student Conference, 10:00 a.m. - 2:30 p.m.; Middle School dismiss at 12:30 p.m.

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November 13, 2019: Dedication of tree and bench at Russell Blvd. Elementary in memory of Darwin Hindman
April 21, 2020: Columbia Fund for Academic Excellence Banquet, Stephens College
May 8, 2020: Partners in Education Breakfast, 7:15 a.m. - 8:30 a.m., Holiday Inn Executive Center