



January 26, 2012

Dear Parents and Community Members:

As we approach the mid-point of the current school year I find myself pausing and reflecting on the events that have transpired. This has been a momentous year! As a result of data collected last year, some new activities were initiated that enhance the quality of education for our students. For example, each grade-level completed a service project. Many of you will also remember the scare-crows out in front of the school during the month of October. They were built around favorite characters from books students and classes had been reading. A huge debt of gratitude is owed to the PTA and our fantastic volunteers for making these possible.

Another organization that works tirelessly to enhance student learning is the Community Council of J.R. Smith Elementary. The Community Council is comprised of community members who were elected in a secret ballot election by the community as well as school employees who were elected by other school employees in a similar secret ballot election. Of all the tasks this council is charged with, the two you might be most familiar with are the drop-off /pick-up procedure and the School Plan.

I am perpetually grateful for everyone who ardently adheres to the drop-off/pick-up procedure. Thank you for remembering that during drop-off and pick-up times there are no left turns allowed into the parking lot from 500 North, that 'singles' are picked up in the yellow cross hatched area on 500 North and 'multiples' are picked up in the designated area in the school parking lot.

The School Plan for 2011-2012 can be found on the school website (<http://www.wasatch.edu/page/1352> Click on the Community Tab, then Community Council and it is in the middle as "2011-2012 School Plan"). The plan indicates the DuFour's model of Professional Learning Communities is an area of focus. Each Monday when your student comes home an hour early, teachers are engrossed in the process of identifying what students must know. Once those items have been defined, teachers work together to develop assessments that all students across the grade-level will take to determine if students know the identified content. The next step is for teachers to



identify what will be done to enrich those students who know the identified content and re-teach those who don't. This process is repeated every Monday. We refer to this as "Professional Learning Communities". As stated in the plan, \$3000.00 was spent in professional development to maintain the emphasis on Professional Learning Communities. In this way we are earnestly striving to ensure all students are stretched academically.

One of the major measures of instructional effectiveness is DIBELS. DIBELS is a nationally normed test administered at regular intervals throughout the year following standardized testing protocols. The data is clean. Enclosed is a graph showing, by grade-level, the percentages of students who are at or above benchmark, below benchmark or well below benchmark. The data shows that in every grade-level the percentage of students who are at or above benchmark has increased since the start of this academic year. It also shows that in every grade-level the percentage of students who are well below benchmarks has decreased during the same time period. This is one indicator of the fact that students are learning.

Looking up from my desk, I see the sun is shining and it calls me back from my moment of reflection; calling to mind the fact that there is still a lot of work to do to ensure that all students are reading on grade-level by the end of third grade. It is time to get back to the task at hand, educating our students.

Sincerely,

Ryan Brown  
Principal

Enclosure: Graph

