

## *From the superintendent*

### **Keeping our focus in these critical times**



How do we make up for millions of dollars in lost state aid during these hard economic times?

What is the best system for enrolling students in our new middle school configuration?

Which of the important priorities in our strategic plan do we tackle first?

There always are difficult decisions to be made when you are charged with the education and well-being of thousands of children and teen-agers. This year, there are challenges for us on every front as we continue to focus on our future amid the worst fiscal crisis our state and nation have faced in decades.

How easy it can be to get distracted by a program's cost or an administrative process.

Yet, though the bottom line may seem daunting when it is counted in dollars and cents, there is only one bottom line that matters to us in the end.

What is best for our students?

That question always is front and center. It guides us and ensures that we maintain the right focus in our planning.

We are pleased to have arrived at a final decision on middle school enrollment for 2009-10 (*see related stories*). It was a demanding process, most especially for the 30 volunteers on our Middle School Enrollment Planning Committee.

The importance of the decision before them, the information they were required to digest and the critiques they were required to absorb made the process trying at times. The committee brought forward two solid options to me and the Board of Education that both were united in one goal – to implement the most equitable system for all of our students.

They never lost track of our one essential question, nor did our administrators and the board.

The process was similar throughout our strategic planning process (*see related stories*). The conversations and the decisions sometimes were hard, but everyone involved maintained a steadfast focus on our students.

The end result was an excellent blueprint for our district's growth over the next 3-5 years. The strategic plan will guide us toward the best solutions for our schools because it was developed with the right purpose in mind.

Now we are in the middle of the most difficult budget development process in memory. How do school districts statewide balance grim financial realities with the duty to educate and nurture the young people of our communities?

It is an especially difficult task for high-needs districts like ours.

I assure you we will make our budget decisions based on the critical task of maintaining an environment of constant improvement for our students. We will be forced to make hard choices, but in the end we will make those choices focused squarely on our bottom line.

What is best for our students?

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Eva C. Joseph". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Eva C. Joseph, Ed.D.  
Superintendent of Schools