

Superintendent Mark Dockins
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District Commitment to Continuous Improvement

Uintah School District Goals:

1. Increase every student's learning
2. Ensure physical and emotional well-being
3. Create a positive school and district culture
4. Improve public support and confidence
5. Ensure financial responsibility.

These five goals direct and focus the educational efforts of our entire school district. The first goal, "Increase every student's learning" is the ultimate purpose for why our school district exists. The other four goals are critical in our objectives to reach the goal of educating all our students; however, our jobs only exist in order to make sure that all children in our community are educated.

In order to achieve the district goal of increasing every student's learning, we must make the commitment to a clear focus on learning and continuous effort for student/teacher improvement. The key to any focus on learning improvement is knowing what our achievement levels are to begin with. This is why it is so important that we share our data as colleagues' and create common formative assessments for our students.

Teachers have always been willing to share best practices with other teachers; however, teachers are more reluctant to share how their students achieve on tests. It is a threatening process because we always feel like we are being evaluated by how our students do on these tests. Yet, it is necessary to face our fears and do the best to overcome those fears by focusing on what is needed to improve. For us to make continuous growth as a district, we absolutely have to be able to lay all our student achievement on the table and start discussing best practices. There are very few successful businesses that work in an information vacuum; instead, they analyze comparative data and strategize on how to achieve their specific goals. It is critical that we routinely monitor how our students are achieving and compare that information with other common groups in order to see where our students stand. I certainly find it disconcerting to see results that show our district's CRT scores below the state average or below those of similar districts such as Duchesne. Yet, that information is critical in our ability to make changes to improve student achievement. Without comparison to other student achievement it is difficult to gauge how well our students are progressing. Robert Eaker states that we must assess on the basis of tangible results rather than best intentions, otherwise our efforts become a random groping in the dark rather than purposeful improvement.

It is also not enough to merely make progress. We need to make appropriate progress based on where our students are achieving in a comparative scale. If, for instance, our students are at the bottom end of the achievement scale on the state CRT's, it is important that they make progress at a much steeper curve than those students who are at the top of the achievement scale. This emphasis isn't based on merely trying to make adequate yearly progress, but on the fact that those students who are coming into our district with major gaps in

their learning must make more progress in order to merely reach their age appropriate minimum levels of achievement. There is much less time for those students to reach their appropriate standard.

Uintah School District is committed to continuous improvement for our students and ourselves. Our focus on student improvement is necessarily in the forefront of all our efforts to ensure that we increase every student's learning.