

From the Desk of the Principal
Issue 2
March 2015

Dear Walker Families,

As spring offers us a natural opportunity for renewal, I hope you are eagerly looking forward to spring break. Fingers crossed for nice weather during the break! At Walker School, we are now firmly in the third trimester. Our teachers have been collaborating and working hard to be responsive to our students' learning needs. We are so thankful for your partnership in your child's education at Walker!

When we return from spring break (April 6), we will begin the process for getting ready for next school year, meeting together to assign students for next year's class lists. Please know that our instructional team works very hard to consider many variables in creating class lists that set up our students for a positive learning environment. You are always welcome to write a letter about your child's class assignment, but please do not name a specific teacher; rather, feel free to describe your child's learning style and include things that might benefit him/her as a learner.

Teaching and Learning

Across the district, each school met over the last couple of weeks to focus on the school improvement process. Walker School teachers have been reviewing growth data during our benchmark data sessions last month in an effort to identify trends and adjust instructional planning so that it is responsive to the needs of our students.

Over all, Walker showed noteworthy growth in MAP scores when reviewing the fall to winter benchmark. While we are not where we would like to be as a school, we are on the upswing, especially taking into consideration the implementation of the Common Core State Standards. I am confident, that with the ongoing teacher collaboration and continuous improvements in differentiation and instructional planning, our Walker student growth scores will continue to reflect increased learning.

On Friday, February 27, all district teachers participated in an Institute Day. We focused our instructional planning on best practices in reading and math, exploring the work of Karen Hess and her "Depth of Knowledge" questioning strategies, which will help us expand teaching capacity to engage students on a critical thinking level. We are continuing to collaborate in grade level meetings across the district this week to implement best practices.

PARCC Testing

At this point, we have completed the PBA (Performance Based Assessment) version of the computer-based assessments aligned to the Common Core State

Standards in grades 3, 4, and 5. PARCC testing has gone smoothly overall with just a handful of technical glitches. Many of our students have finished in less than the fully allotted testing time and seem pretty positive about the process. We believe our students have benefited from a daily PE class first thing before testing. They looked forward to their water and gum allowances during testing blocks...and the PARCC Survival Kits were a big hit! Thanks for supporting your child to take a positive and easygoing approach to this testing!

FYI, we will administer another round of PARCC testing in April/May (more information to come).

If you have questions about the PARCC assessments or your child's progress at Walker, please contact your child's teacher and let me know if I might assist further. As always, thank you for your investment in your child's education! Have a great spring break!

Eric Chisausky
Principal