

September 15, 2009

Embracing Inclusion

In my last letter, I discussed the importance of purposeful decision-making and some of the growth areas that our most recent DC-CAS test scores revealed. Although we did not meet Adequately Yearly Progress (AYP) as a result of lower-than-expected reading scores for our special education population, it is also important to recognize that our overall proficiency rates are close to 90%, an achievement that represents some of the highest results in the District of Columbia. We must ask ourselves what we are doing well, but equally important is an inquiry around what we can do better.

Identifying growth areas is an opportunity; in this case, we must recognize the critical nature of refined inclusion. Although "inclusion" is a programmatic term in which all students are served in a common setting, we will implement it in a broader way. The dictionary definition of "inclusion" is the act of comprising or embracing the parts of a whole. At Janney, we will take this more literal definition seriously, and will act on it. We will identify the needs of all of our students, whether extra support or additional challenges are needed. We will treat individual students as parts of a whole, both in the sense of meeting individual needs and with an understanding that the types of support vary across the many skills we expect our students to acquire. In other words, we will identify where all students are and how we can encourage growth regardless of the starting point, the subject, or the learning objective. As parents and families, I ask you to hold us accountable to this worthy aim, and that you continue to emphasize growth, not an end goal of "proficient" or "advanced" for your students. Just as we will not be satisfied with our leading proficiency rates, we will demand that all students progress through targeted supports and lessons that meet their individual needs. Only then have will we have a truly inclusive community.