



from the office of Superintendent Robert Collins

Shared Responsibilities for Our Communities and Lessons from El Cajon Valley High School



Superintendent Bob Collins Meets with El Cajon Police Chief Cliff Diamond (left) and Mayor Mark Lewis (right)

It was with great passion that Mark Lewis, Mayor of El Cajon, spoke of graffiti in the community and a deterioration of the community environment. El Cajon Police Chief Cliff Diamond spoke of his concern regarding gang violence in East County and his personal commitment to Character Education and Character Counts!

These meetings centered on building partnerships. We will utilize our strong communication resources, as a District and as schools, coupled with our relationships with students and parents to jointly address the issues of graffiti in the community, community environment and character education beyond the school walls. **El Cajon Valley High School has taken those steps already.**

El Cajon Valley High School, its Football Team and Real Community Leadership

On my visits to El Cajon Valley High School, I observed a beautiful campus environment and one that is getting better each day with improvements made possible by Proposition H. I was also impressed with the school's efforts to implement a program called "Keys to Success," a character education program that mirrors the same universal values of the national Character Counts! Program. Of particular interest were the efforts of Danny Goodrich, Varsity football coach, and the football team which has been in the community on a regular basis, cleaning up graffiti and neighborhoods. The program began with "Lend a Hand" sponsored by the Community Redevelopment Agency and continued with the support of Police Officer Rich Agundez.

We will want to look at how we can learn from efforts like that of El Cajon Valley High School in order to affect the quality of life in all of our communities through partnerships with community, civic and business organizations. We know that our schools are truly part of our communities and not islands.

Because programs that help build our communities in turn make a large difference for our students and their families, we should be alert to opportunities to continually build community partnerships.

Strong Leadership, Vision and Commitment Define Special Education Instructional Council



Special Education Instructional Council meeting February 10, 2008, at Work Training Center addressed goal-setting and results

One cannot help but be impressed by the Special Education Instructional Council that met February 10th at the Work Training Center in El Cajon. Every school was represented and engaged around S.M.A.R.T. goals. I thought you would be interested in the goals developed by the Special Education Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) at each school.

Michael Schmoker and Research Addressing Goal Setting

The first question we will want to ask, however, is why goals? Most of this answer comes from the research of Michael Schmoker and his landmark books, **Results** and **Results Now**. Schmoker tracked student achievement data in hundreds of high schools across the nation for schools that developed powerful subject matter teams, and set precise, measurable goals. Those goals were addressed in every subject matter/departmental team meeting, and benchmarks were established to inform instruction. Schools using a powerful team model significantly outperformed those schools where teams did not exist.



Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Results-Oriented and Time-Bound

As I listened to each Department Chair of Special Education talk about their team goals, you could see how teachers who had implemented their PLC models were actively working together on strategies to achieve their goals, and understanding potential barriers and making appropriate adjustments. In each case, PLCs identified an area of need, established a baseline, wrote a departmental goal and planned specific action steps to address the goal. Every action step identified responsibilities, a time-frame and measurable results. This work explicitly reflects what research tells us is highly effective in improving student achievement. The goals set by Special Education teachers in PLCs reflect insight and commitment to student success. Just a couple are examples for this work: (1) By June 2008, 55% of 10th grade special education students will pass the English and mathematics sections of the CAHSEE; (2) Students who become active on itinerant caseloads during the 07-08 school year will have 50% fewer failing grades.

I also want to recognize the efforts of Marilyn LeResche, Director of Special Education, in leading this work. Her expertise, dedication and skill were evident throughout the Instructional Council meeting, and also in making our special education program strong and vibrant.