

## **Superintendent of Schools Annual Report 2017-18**

It was an honor for me to serve as the Superintendent of Schools for the Kittery School District—my first in that capacity—and I look forward to many more years to come! The Kittery School District is a forward-thinking, progressive organization. We have a deep understanding of how children learn best, and we apply that understanding to everything we do. We are proud of the fact that the recently graduated Class of 2018 at Traip Academy graduated with a bona fide four-year Proficiency-based Learning experience, and we are equally proud that both Shapleigh School and Mitchell Primary School are looking at a full PBL deployment over the next two years. Our goal is to espouse a true K-12 Proficiency-based Learning model of teaching, learning, and assessing by 2020.

Prior to the start of the 2017-18 school year, the Kittery School Committee and the Leadership Team (comprised of Central Office and school administration) honed in on two commitments for the school year:

**Commitment A** ~ *Promote a safe, healthful, and respectful school culture, free of bias and harassment*

**Commitment B** ~ *Ensure engaging, innovative, and rigorous teaching, learning, and assessing for all students*

The articulated commitments helped the District to prioritize time, effort, and resources throughout the year, and the results were quite favorable. Emerging from **Commitment 'A'** was the Kittery Civil Rights Initiative, a three-pronged effort to joining the national discussion about race, multiculturalism, civility, and acceptance of all groups at a time when many are feeling marginalized. The establishment of Civil Rights Teams at Traip Academy and Shapleigh School, a review of our curriculum to ensure that gaps and overlaps of essential curricular components of the initiative do not exist, and the creation of the Kittery Advocates For All (KAFA), a community-based volunteer organization that provides a community perspective and raises awareness of issues related to multiculturalism.

**Commitment 'B'** placed a spotlight on the work that the District has done in the Proficiency-based Learning arena and called for building-level teacher leaders along with the District's leadership team to refine, implement, and communicate the components of a PBL learning system K-12. The mechanics of this highly effective teaching model are not enough, however. The Commitment also called for a renewed effort among our talented and creative teachers to cultivate, hone, and refine instructional practices that are engaging and build ownership of and autonomy in learning. I am proud of the work that the District has done to move this Commitment forward. I am especially appreciative of the K-12 Proficiency-based Learning Facilitators Group (comprised of teachers and administrators) who have lead the work this year to move PBL forward. I am also proud of the work that has come out of the three PBL Parent Advisory Groups. Successfully

communicating the nuts, bolts, and benefits of the Proficiency-based Learning model of teaching, learning, and assessing to our families has been made easier by the guidance of the PBL Parent Advisory Groups.

The work related to our two 2017-18 Commitments will surely continue in the years to come. Our work has just begun, and I expect the School Committee and the Leadership Team will continue to move these Commitments forward for the future. I brag about the Kittery School District from one end of the State to the other. With nearly 1,100 students, 213 employees, and three beautiful schools, we are large enough to have the resources necessary to educate children in the 21<sup>st</sup> century but small and nimble enough to know our students and to customize for their unique needs. Our small class sizes, our commitment to the effective use of technology (with a 1:1 device deployment in grades 4 through 12), and our pledge to truly know our students and their families make the Kittery School District the perfect place to learn and work. It is an honor to work in a community that so highly values the equitable education of its children.

Finally, I encourage everyone to follow the day-to-day happenings in our schools by following us on Twitter ~ (@kitteryschools). It is a great way to stay informed and to further cultivate the spirit of pride that defines our community.

Respectfully submitted,

Eric F. Waddell  
Superintendent of Schools