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Superintendent: School district is making progress implementing action plan

“Pledge of Achievement” focuses individualized attention on students

HENDERSON – The first year of implementation of the new Clark County School District (CCSD) action plan is showing positive results for students, Superintendent Pat Skorkowsky said Monday.

In his second State of the District speech, Skorkowsky noted that 41 of the 57 high schools that receive graduation rates increased graduation with the Class of 2014. At the elementary level, students participating in the Zoom School programs for English Language Learners are showing incredible progress in early literacy.

The 2015 “Quality Counts” report by Education Week ranked Nevada third in the nation in increases of test scores among eighth graders in reading, and eighth in the nation in closing gaps between student populations in eighth-grade math.

Skorkowsky noted there is much work to be done to boost Nevada’s standings in national education studies, but he is pleased with the progress the state has seen so far. Clark County students make up about 70 percent of Nevada’s school population.

“The time is now for our community to invest in our schools,” Skorkowsky said. “For too long, we’ve been best known as the fastest-growing district in the nation. I want Clark County to be known as the fastest-improving district in the nation.”

A GROWING AND DIVERSE STUDENT POPULATION

The district continues to grow at a record pace, with 10,000 additional students in the current school year compared with the 2010-11 school year. CCSD has added 1,100 students since September 2014.

Sixty-one schools are on the “year-round watch list” and 21 schools are being considered for rezoning because they are overcrowded.

The school district plans to hire 2,600 new teachers for the 2015-16 school year.

Skorkowsky announced today that the district is preparing school sites for immediate construction if the 2015 Nevada Legislature approves a rollover of the school construction bond.

“Our families and our schools need immediate relief from this unanticipated growth,” Skorkowsky said. “If the legislature joins with us to address our significant enrollment growth, we will start construction on seven new schools, and we will open those schools for the 2016-17 school year.”

The district continues to reflect the diversity of our community, with 45 percent Hispanic students, 13 percent black/African-American students, 6 percent multi-racial, and 6 percent Asian students.

NEW DISTRICT SCORECARD SETS GOALS

Last July, the Board of School Trustees set six main goals for the school district. The new District Scorecard is now available on pledgeofachievement.com and will be used as part of Skorkowsky’s annual evaluation.

Skorkowsky discussed the plans in place to support increases in all six goals:

- Increase third-grade literacy
- Decrease achievement gaps
- Increase graduation rates
- Increase family engagement
- Increase student safety and happiness
- Increase participation in Career and Technical Education and Advanced Placement classes

“This is the most transparent and accountable the school district has been with our community,” Skorkowsky said. “We have asked the community to join with us to watch our growth, and to help us when possible. The Pledge of Achievement focuses on the individual success of every student in every classroom.”

GROUNDBREAKING WORK

The school district has joined with several unconventional partners to pioneer groundbreaking work in the field of education.

Two weeks ago, the school district announced the first steps it is taking with local business and community leaders to develop tools that will measure the return on investment the school district receives from district programs, departments and schools.

The initiative, called “Ensuring Every Dollar Counts,” will eventually lead to a program-based budget, Skorkowsky said.

The superintendent also announced plans to create a Peer Assisted Review program to attract

and retain teachers in conjunction with the Clark County Education Association.

The district is also working with the Clark County Association of School Administrators and Professional-Technical Employees to create a “pay for performance” plan with input from both teachers and administrators.

Finally, the district is working with the Educational Support Association on additional professional development for instructional and teachers’ aides.

“We know that we do not hold the answers on our own,” Skorkowsky said. “Our community partners are stepping up and offering us the support we need to transform our education system and culture.”

2015 LEGISLATURE – A FOCUS ON EDUCATION

Skorkowsky noted that all of this work leads to one purpose: providing “Every Student in Every Classroom” with the tools and experience necessary to graduate and succeed in college or in a career. This will require focus from all supporters in the district, the community, and elected officials, Skorkowsky said.

He highlighted the agenda for the upcoming 2015 legislature:

- Revise the Nevada Plan Funding Formula
- Full-day kindergarten for all students
- Expand the Zoom Schools program/support Victory Schools
- Create a “rainy day” fund for schools
- Ask the legislature to rollover the 1998 bond

“Our community is rallying together and calling for more for our students,” Skorkowsky said. “And it is time to deliver more to our students and their families. Our Pledge of Achievement action plan and new District Scorecard will help the public ensure we are accountable and consistently making progress.

“The time is now,” Skorkowsky said.

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