

**September 18, 2017**

“Are we starting the fourth week of classes already?” This is probably a question students asked their parents, and teachers asked each other as they prepared to launch this week’s learning. Although “time flying by” is one of the certainties counted on, we are thankful to be able to enjoy many meaningful activities such as an awesome school life (football, volleyball, [cross country](#), tennis); a community pep rally; a day off from school for students and [staff development](#) for [teachers](#); [power hour](#) at our elementary campuses; and [students](#) completely immersed in [dynamic learning programs](#). We even managed to host a BBQ luncheon in [celebration](#) of the awesome 2016-2017 accomplishments of the [Blended](#) High School students and staff. Go Blended!

Every school year we hope that programs implemented in previous years (like [Power Hour](#) and [The Leader in Me](#)), are implemented with ease and are becoming a part of the District’s culture. Walking through Garfield Elementary this morning provided me with a sense of transformation and success. First, the principal told us about the awesome [Synergy Rally](#) they had early in the morning. Then we observed how the [first grade](#) staff, the [campus principal](#) and their students were entirely engaged in Power Hour. It was beyond [impressive](#)! We are certain that every student can be a dynamic and advanced [reader](#) if every classroom at every grade level in every elementary campus has the same level of focus and intensity we observed in the first grade classrooms at Garfield this morning. Thank you Garfield!

As a District, we absolutely have so much to be proud of. Over the past three years we have been able to improve learning opportunities through unique instructional initiatives - Planning Protocol, Bilingual Academies, Curriculum Dashboard, and Power Hour. We have also been able to focus on the future - Blended Academy, the CTE Center and ECHS. Even with all these accomplishments we have continued to set (and reach) higher goals for all of us. This year for example, we launched Block Scheduling at the secondary level, implemented the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) in the early grades, and produced a budget that covered 100% of our employees’ health insurance benefits.

We have successfully handled these issues because we are able to come together and plan. For example, meaningful discussions surrounding block scheduling were held as far back as three years ago, and an insurance committee met consistently for an entire year to study our health needs. It should be no wonder how we were able to successfully address major issues which affect the climate and culture of our students and our employees.

I want to now introduce and begin open and courageous conversations about the next phase of our District Reform - SFDRCSID’s [STEM 2025](#) plan. Our goal is to develop a plan (initiative) that will prepare more than 50% of our current 1st grade students for rigorous STEM pathways as they enter their high school freshman year in 2025. Currently, there are approximately 117 students taking Algebra I as 8th grade students. In previous years the number of 8th grade students taking Algebra I has been similar (in 2015: 124 students enrolled in Algebra I; and in 2016: 135 students enrolled in Algebra I). This number has to absolutely increase threefold.

The number of 1st grade students who later enroll in an Algebra I course as 8th grade students defines the number of students who have potential for successfully completing a rigorous STEM pathway with minimal remediation. Therefore, increasing the math capacity of our students will increase their success in programs such as electrical trades, Project Lead the Way, robotics, health careers, calculus, and many

other rigorous high school courses and programs. Also, an increase in the number of students prepared for STEM pathways allows the District to offer additional pathways needed to provide for our community's workforce needs. I absolutely see a Cyber Security pathway in our future.

Incidentally, by increasing the number of 8th grade students taking Algebra I to about 375 students will also ensure we have enough student academic capacity in the middle schools (at the regular DRMS and a future Middle School STEM magnet). To build the academic capacity, we will begin by developing and implementing a long-range plan to build curriculum, teacher capacity, resources, learning time and student support from 1st grade through 8th grade. We are excited about the future opportunities for our students and hope you will engage in the planning.