

**WELCOME TO YEAR TWO OF TIER I:
*THIS IS THE YEAR!***

In the spring of 2010, the St. Johnsbury School was notified belatedly that its standardized test scores placed it in the category of a Tier I school. This designation created by the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) law was designed to identify schools who had not met “adequate yearly progress” over a period of time. The measure of adequate yearly progress, known simply as AYP, is a complex formula whose bar for reaching it increases every three years, until theoretically all students reach proficiency in the year 2014. This has not happened in Vermont, and it has not happened nationally. It is for that and other reasons that NCLB is in the process of being reviewed for adjustments and waivers.

Yet our status as a Tier I school, as unwelcome as it was, served as a tool for reflective analysis which we undertook last year with the help of federal School Improvement Grant funds. The task was to transform the school, its culture, and its student performance so that we could meet AYP by the end of three years. It was a challenging year which sometimes seemed overwhelming. Yet, we found our way through it and can point to several achievements which have put us on a path forward.

Some of these achievements that are setting the stage for this year are:

- ✓ The development and piloting of a set of Standards of Professional Practice meant to serve as a picture of expected high quality teacher performance standards that is research-based and correlated to improved student achievement;
- ✓ An analysis of our school by an external team sent by the State Department of Education outlining the strengths of our schools and identifying areas to address;
- ✓ An analysis of our math and literacy programs carried out by consultants to guide us in increasing our intensity and effectiveness in these two tested areas;
- ✓ The formation of a Professional Design Team whose task it was to create structures and resources to support the professional development of our teaching faculty, including the Standards of Professional Practice, the refinement of the report card, and the designing of a new schedule to increase instructional time;
- ✓ The use of “collaborative work time” for each house for the analysis of student work in order to maximize instructional interventions;
- ✓ The use of weekly after school work time to establish outcomes at each grade level for literacy and math so that expectations are set high and are clear to all;

- ✓ The development of a new classroom model to maximize effectiveness of math and literacy instruction by pairing teachers who will specialize in either math or literacy, supported by math and literacy specialists at each house level;
- ✓ The adoption of a co-teaching model to add flexibility to the special education strategies we can use;
- ✓ Training of a team in the Vermont Integrated Instruction Model (ViiM) that will pull together a school-wide program of Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS) with a “response to intervention” approach to instruction that will be supported by our consistent use of student data and progress monitoring to ensure that student needs are addressed in time;
- ✓ The adoption of a new after-school program with an exciting skill-based curriculum.

Some of these are completed activities, some are ongoing, and others were first steps in a process that will naturally develop new initiatives. The work that we did last year was both reflective and transformative, but was not always comfortable. We believe that we will make modest gains this year in our yearly testing. However, with the stage set by our actions last year and the addition of our new Principal for Instruction who will work with our Principal of General Operations to lead the school forward, this is the year that will bring the results we need. I say it is the year because it *has to be* the year. We have worked hard, done our research and training, and now it is time to reap the benefits of that work.

We will be holding a Community Forum on October 26 to hear from the citizens of St. Johnsbury what outcomes they expect the St. Johnsbury School to produce. We will use this opportunity to listen and to participate in the dialogue. We do this because we cannot ultimately succeed without the support of our community. I look forward to hearing the constructive participation that will help us build a common purpose to educate the children of St. Johnsbury for the benefit of all.