



VICTOR VALLEY UNION HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT
Office of the Superintendent

March 8, 2010

Dear Victor Valley UHSD Educational Community:

As we approach the finish line of our school year it is important to determine how well our students are performing academically and how well our district is progressing toward becoming a GREAT school district. One might wonder... how would a school district even begin to measure progress toward GREATNESS? Of course a district would assume they are moving toward GREATNESS when the data shows increased student achievement on grades and test scores. Our internal assessment data reveal that students are continuing to show progress. We must wait until STAR testing to determine if that "snapshot" in time reveals our students are mastering or exceeding state standards. I have confidence they are!

However, there are other factors to consider if in reality a district is heading in the right direction toward GREATNESS. During the upcoming months the Victor Valley team will begin to define and set criteria to measure the following:

- ❖ Employee attendance
- ❖ Student attendance
- ❖ Safe schools
- ❖ Students taking and passing AP courses
- ❖ Students taking gateway classes to college
- ❖ Number of highly qualified teachers
- ❖ Retention of employees in Victor Valley UHSD
- ❖ Positive net between inter-district transfers
- ❖ Student enrollment growth
- ❖ CAHSEE passing and graduation rates
- ❖ Positive public relations plan
- ❖ Maintenance and technology work orders completed
- ❖ Parent/employee survey results
- ❖ Fiscal solvency and balanced budget

I am proud to report that much progress has occurred relative to our goals set in October. I encourage you to pause and take note of some of the actions that have occurred to date toward accomplishing these goals:

March 2010: Progress Report

Initiative # 1

Move our district from GOOD to GREAT

1. Improve communication

- STAT, CSAT and Parent Advisory Councils established
- Student Leadership/ASB meeting held
- Improved website format
- All classified employees have email accounts
- Three District Q&A's written
- March 24th Budget Community Forum scheduled
- Board Bits published

2. Increase customer service

- Customer service plan developed and approved
- Executive Leadership drafted implementation plan
- Video with Terry Kurtz in progress
- Staff development plan/posters/cards planned
- District office receptionist relocated

3. Nurture staff pride and loyalty

- Site employee/student recognition plans created
- Six administrators nominated for ACSA Awards
- District-wide employee recognition plan in progress
- Superintendent messages to all staff
- Employees/students/parents surveyed
- District Office vision/spirit building
- CSEA and VVTA bargaining units settled

4. Initiate a district public engagement plan

- GOOD to GREAT theme taking hold
- Cabinet and principals joined service clubs
- PTA's established at 3 middle schools and University Prep
- Top Ten BESTS for VVUHSD published
- Garnered positive Daily Press exposure

Initiative # 2

Coordinate systems and resources to maximize student/employee potential

1. Maintain fiscal solvency

- Transparency developed-school forums, Q & A's
- Principals trained in managing site budgets
- Internal Auditor hired for increased accountability
- School Services contracted for immediate budget review
- Budget stabilization plan in progress

2. Enhance revenue

- Good to Great Fund (High Desert Community) established
- EveryDay Counts! launched

3. Standardize district policies and procedures

- Critical Board Policies updated
- Principal's evaluation tool refined
- Superintendent/assistant supt. evaluations developed
- Cell phone policy updated
- Cabinet/Executive Cabinets established
- Executive Leadership Council held for all district managers
- Principal's Roundtables held twice a month
- Schools implementing *Raising the STAR Bar*

4. Ensure safe school environments

- Safe School Ambassadors Program at two middle schools
- District Incident Report (DIR) created
- Community Day School to open in April

5. Provide oversight and accountability for the Bond Measure

- Three Bond Oversight Committees held
- Adelanto High School under construction
- Facilities information posted on website
- Silverado's Early College High School (ECHS) to open and replace the 9th grade campus in August

Initiative # 3

Implement the DAIT Plan to ensure students learn at grade level and beyond

1. Implement the strategic improvement model

- Superintendent's emphasis on building leadership capacity
- Standards based instruction expected
- Researched-based instructional practices utilized
- Teachers using Data Director to drive instruction
- Professional Learning Communities forming throughout the district

WORK IN PROGRESS

- **BUDGET:** If you are interested in learning more about the financial status of our school district please join members of the Governing Board for a Special Board Meeting to be held at Goodwill Education Center on Wednesday, March 24th beginning at 5:00 p.m. A report will be presented by School Services of California coupled with an opportunity for community members to participate in a Q & A forum. As a result of this review our district will embark on an aggressive stabilization plan to weather the economical storm predicted for the next two years.
- **EVERYDAY COUNTS!** As part of the process of adding ways to improve academic rigor for our students, student attendance was reviewed, since it is a critical link to student achievement. My observations were alarming. Last year our district-wide attendance rate was just a tad over **92%**. One of the indicators of a high performing school district is a district wide student attendance rate of over 98%. As a district striving toward GREATNESS we must believe that nothing less than 98% should be the standard.

On average, a typical VVUHSD student misses about **7% of the school year or about 13 days per year**. The school district is paid by the state on the basis of average daily attendance and receives no money for each day a student is absent. This loss averages about \$32 a day per student absence, regardless of the reason for that absence.

An annual reduction of absences per day for each child in our district would result in an increase of:

1 day = 63,302 additional hrs. of instruction or **\$ 341,000 in additional State revenue**
2 days = 128,604 additional hrs. of instruction or **\$ 682,790 in additional State revenue**
3 days = 191,906 additional hrs. of instruction or **\$ 1,024,186 in additional State revenue**

A review of the District Absence Report for 2009-2010 reveals that our district's total projected ADA loss due to student absences will amount to approximately **\$4,438,140** and over **835,926** lost hours of instructional time. While no one intends to encourage a sick child to attend school, we realize that there are many reasons above and beyond illness that prevent children from attending school (i.e. missed buses, over sleeping, suspensions, vacations, truancy, etc.).

All principals have been charged to work with staff to come up with a plan that focuses on team work to reach 98% district-wide as there's no one person or group of employees responsible for improving student attendance. The plan contains two areas of focus at this time: (1) implementing procedures at each school to increase attendance thereby increasing revenue at each site and, (2) creating a public information campaign designed to educate parents and our community about the importance of daily attendance. We also plan to partner with Victor Elementary School District in this effort throughout Victorville.

GOOD TO GREAT: I am confident we are heading in the right direction toward becoming a school district of **GREATNESS**. Everyone is beginning to feel the difference. I am proud to report that our schools are thriving, the budget will be balanced, and our employees are working together as a team to actualize our goals. I would like to take this opportunity to say **Thank You** to everyone for taking on new challenges during these exciting and challenging times in our district.

Sincerely,



Marilou Ryder, Ed. D.
Superintendent