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October 25, 2019

Dear FCSS Community:

As you may know, the Georgia Department of Education lifted its embargo of the 2019 College and Career Readiness Performance Index (CCRPI) scores earlier today. While I value these scores, I believe that any indicator – e.g., a standardized test score – in isolation cannot truly measure success. Although you may be disappointed that our 2019 CCRPI scores show a general decline in overall performance at most schools and the district, I am not disappointed in your work or the work of our students, neither today nor last spring.

The majority of CCRPI calculations are based on the Milestones. Higher CCRPI scores are achieved when a large increase occurs from one year to the next. In our case, you may recall that the FCSS showed tremendous growth in 2018 (compared to 2017). Even though many of our 2019 scores are similar to those from 2018, we did not have significant growth in 2019. A detailed analysis of results will be shared at each upcoming School Governance Team meeting, and a review of our district's CCRPI will be shared at the November 14 Board of Education meeting. Careful analyses and feedback from stakeholders will determine what, if any, adjustments to our improvement plans are warranted in light of all results. We are on the right path, though, and I can assure you that: 1) No major corrections are needed, and 2) As always, this district will remain committed to continuous improvement and providing all students with a quality education that will prepare them for their future.

None of this is an excuse; no excuses are necessary. We continue to improve, and our schools and district would be remiss not to measure achievement in a variety of meaningful ways. I would never rely on the results of a single test to make such a determination; this is my professional opinion today, and it was my professional opinion last year when we were reaping the benefit of a drastic increase from 2017 to 2018. In fact, no matter what our district's CCRPI score may say, you may rest assured that 2019 was one of our best years ever, and this was proven by multiple data sources. For example, the 2019 CCRPI was determined by tests administered around the same time that an AdvancED review team visited our district and then universally commended our instructional processes. We earned our highest accreditation score ever (over 50 points higher than 2014). In addition, during the renewal of our Charter in 2019, an abundance of high quality practices were identified by the Commission, and we were singled out among many as an "exceptional system." The FCSS had a (combined four- and five-year cohorts) graduation rate of 94.2% in 2019, and the Georgia Accrediting Commission recognized all five of our schools as being "Accredited with Quality."

Please remember my remarks from earlier this week; our work is an investment, and it is important to watch the big picture. Growth and progression in learning occur in a cyclical nature, and “ups” and “downs” exist in our overall upward trajectory of success. The 2019 CCRPI is just a dip, not a crash, and your investments in our students will yield a significant future return. Our commitment to achievement and our vision of a 100% graduation rate remain the same. I am proud of you, our schools, and the FCSS! Thank you for your hard work, perseverance, and dedication.

Respectfully,



Michael Gwatney, Ed.D.
Superintendent