

## Report of the Fremont Special Education Coordinator

During the previous school year, all Ellis School staff received training in the model of Professional Learning Communities. Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) address to following the four questions:

1. What do we want students to learn?
2. How will we know when they have learned it?
3. What will we do when they have not learned it?
4. What will we do when they have learned it?

The Special Education Department began its own PLC in the fall of 2013. The basic purpose was to increase collaboration within the department but it has grown in scope and mission. Each related service provider was asked to choose one grade level team and attend their meetings at least two times per month. The goal: expand communication between special education staff and regular education staff, and to have these individuals be part of the larger school community. Too often we find ourselves isolated during the day, and not sharing our knowledge and expertise of our students. While it has been an adjustment, there have been innumerable examples of special education staff taking an active role in the planning and delivery of instruction for all students and classroom teachers employing new and effective strategies to include all students. While it is a commonly held value that no student can produce their best work without **a skilled teacher** behind them, the staff at Ellis School is working to have **a skilled team of educators and service providers** behind each student!

Another key to student progress is the use of assistive technology to help students with disabilities access the general curriculum. Many students cannot make adequate progress without the use of such teaching tools. Assistive technology tools are not a replacement for quality teaching strategies and tier one instruction. With so many multimedia resources and programs available these days, it is important to remember that teaching tools are meant to enrich student learning, not provide it.

The special education staff routinely uses data to monitor student progress and improve instruction. During the summer of 2013, a group of three teachers dug deep into the state data reporting system, Performance Pathways, to analyze NECAP and Aims Web scores in order to identify those students who required more intensive support on very particular skills prior to the next round of NECAP testing. We expect to see solid growth for special education students when NECAP scores are released this winter.

I want to thank the community of Fremont for their continued support in our mutual goal of helping our students grow into happy, productive adults!

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah E. Krebs, M.Ed., C.A.G.S. District Special Education Coordinator