

From: [Superintendent](#)
To: [EPS.Maillist](#)
Subject: Reflections on the "Why"
Date: Thursday, December 19, 2013 10:47:56 AM
Importance: High

Dear Colleague:

As educators, we focus a great deal of energy and spirit on the "what" and the "how" of our craft – "what" it takes and "how" we can support each student's learning. More important to me, though, is the "why" of our commitment to this work.

Yesterday I had the privilege of convening with several of our colleagues and friends from the Edmonds, Seattle, Highline, and Federal Way school districts at the Gates Foundation. We were gathered to learn from each other how to better prepare for full-day kindergarten expansion, and to build stronger early learning networks in our communities to support better kindergarten and primary grade success. I was asked to provide the welcoming remarks. I chose to talk about **why** I believe you and I are so committed to this work together.

It starts with an undying belief that all men and women are created equal. You may share this fundamental belief with me based upon a legal framework, a political framework, or a spiritual or religious framework -- or all of these. In my view, the basis for this belief is not as important as the actions we take to affirm it, day in and day out. And it's not so much that we have equal talents; you and I know we do not. It's about all of us having the equality of opportunity, and equity of access to the fulfillment of our dreams.

The second part of the "why" of this work is the concept of social justice, a concept to which my wife Sue introduced me soon after we met. I understood the notion, but as a fellow educator, she introduced me to the broader meaning in the pursuit of our profession. Social justice takes many forms – in education I see it as a commitment to removing barriers for those students for whom such barriers prevent their success in school today and in their lives tomorrow. It is up to us -- more so than many other professions -- to overcome the social injustices which so many of our students and their families and ancestors have endured. To me, this is the essence of our "calling" to education. It is given full throated voice in our district's values and our priorities for success for each child entrusted to us.

As you leave our schools and offices for the holidays and our winter break, I warmly invite you to take great joy in the "why" of our work together, and in the truth that we are graced to be working together in a field that can make such positive differences in the lives of our kids, their families, and through them the world they will surely inherit.

May your well-deserved break bring you the graceful beauty of our holidays, and may the precious time with your loved ones be a time of joy, of reflection on the many gifts that are ours, and of peace of mind and heart and pride in the wonderful work we do together.

Warmest wishes to you and yours,
Gary