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Subject: Happy Holidays & Some Cheery News!
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You know, the winter holidays are upon us. Tomorrow we'll send our 20,000 students off for a two-week-and-a-day break, and most of us will be taking some R&R time as well. As you prepare to celebrate some time with your family and friends, and get ready to ring in a new year, I'd love for you to take some really good news with you as you depart.

Last week, Greg Lobdell of the [Center for Educational Effectiveness](#) lauded Garfield Elementary for its exemplary work to continuously improve student learning AND for being a [School of Distinction](#) for the third year in a row.

In so doing, Mr. Lobdell recognized, congratulated and thanked **you** and every other school team and district staff member when he pointed out, **"Schools don't improve in isolation; they are part of a system ...** dramatic improvement is occurring throughout the Everett system – improvement due to the work of staff in each school, their leadership, and those supporting them."

Then, almost like he was unwrapping a holiday gift, Mr. Lobdell peeled back some of the data layers about the state's high performing schools. Under that wrapping was evidence of just how well we are doing as a system and how well we stack up compared to other schools in the state:

- **Thirteen** of our schools this year are in the state's **top 50 percent** of highly improving schools. Ultimately, just the top **five** percent earn a *School of Distinction* banner, but you can be very, very proud of how our work is making a difference in student learning.
- Of those 13 schools, Whittier Elementary and Jackson Elementary are in the **top 10 percent**.
- Forest View and Hawthorne are in the **top 25 percent**.
- North Middle School reached the **top 10 percent** in performance growth, and all five of our middle schools are in the top half of the state's highest improving schools. **Yes – all five!** That's a credit to every one of those schools AND the elementary schools sending well-prepared students to middle school.
- Sequoia High and Everett High are in the **top 10 percent** this year. Sequoia was a *School of Distinction* last year and was within only 9 positions of being one this year.
- Everett High is in the **top 10 percent** this year, and Cascade High and Jackson High are in the **top 40 percent** of high performance growth schools.

In addition to these awards for high rates of performance over a five-year period, I'd like to throw in a few other remarkable tidbits your way before you sail off to break:

- Our districtwide four-year [graduation rate](#) rose two percent to **92.9 percent** for 2017, and the five-year rate rose to **95.2 percent** for 2016.
- The College Board recognized us as an [Honor Roll](#) district again for our success in increasing access to AP for underrepresented students while simultaneously maintaining or increasing the percentage of students earning AP exam scores of 3 or higher.

This month the *New York Times* published an article entitled, "[How Effective Is Your School District? A New Measure Shows Where Students Learn the Most.](#)" A researcher at the Stanford University Center for Education Policy Analysis studied some 300 million elementary-school test scores across more than 11,000 school districts to measure how student performance grows as student cohorts move through school. Our district's performance rose to the 96th percentile; we outperform 95 percent of the districts in the country!

By now, you know I think data is important in knowing how well we are serving our students and our community. I *truly* appreciate seeing our good work reflected in data our parents and patrons value, and which document our schools' performance and improvement —*and the lives changed by your good work.*

What I value more than those numbers, however, are the beautiful faces behind them—each student the numbers represent and each staff member who helped each student. And not just in academic pursuits, but in becoming wonderful people who value and respect others, and who know the importance of giving back in this holiday season. (I visited the food drive and present wrapping project at Cascade yesterday, and was overwhelmed with the spirit of giving I observed in countless students hustling to bring joy to families in need—and I know from other visits that Jackson's and Everett's food drives and those in several "feeder" schools were record-breaking!)

As we leave to celebrate our holidays, please know I value you *and* am grateful for the work you do in this district to open doors of opportunities by igniting the wonders of learning, and I am filled with pride at the accomplishments we achieve through our teamwork. We truly have an amazing team in our Everett Public Schools.

May the holiday season bring you the gift of rest and rejuvenation, and some time to rejoice in this work we do together. I look forward to 2018 and the stories we'll be able to tell about the good work we did for kids.

Warmest wishes,

Gary



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