

Good evening President Lock Dawson, Dr. Hansen, and members of the Board.

It is good to be here.

On behalf of RCTA leadership, I'd like to speak to you, the School Board and district management, about my colleagues who do truly good work with our students; and to those colleagues, about the unusually good school district in which you do that work.

I know that when teachers and counselors, psychologists and nurses, librarians, and speech language pathologists arrive at schools in the morning, they share a common characteristic of wanting to be good for students.

Although some believe the narrative that public education attracts people for a variety of reasons, what I know is true is that the desire to help our children, our adolescents, and our young adults, make their lives better, is why so many have chosen to be of service to them in our schools.

This work is done by those who care; and the work they do is inherently good.

Thus, we should recognize they are the ones who know best how to do their work in ways to help our students learn and live.

From personal experience, and from observation, the more removed we are from a position, the more removed we are from what it is like to do that work as it is done today.

They are, after all, the ones who actually have current experience and insight none of the rest of us have.

Because of this, it is important that we trust them and listen to them.

In order to gauge the effectiveness of programs and initiatives designed for the good of our students we should involve those who are with them every day.

District wide decisions, and school decisions, should place a premium on their input.

The best example of this is the current transition to a new teacher evaluation system.

Teachers are part of the evaluation committee, though that is not a required practice, and teachers at three different school sites can choose to participate in the pilot of the new evaluation instrument to help us understand where it works well, and where it does not.

Shared decision making like this is one of many reasons that make this an unusually good school district.

We have a great School Board and district management who work together to put kids first.

Not only do you agree on the ways in which to best serve our students, you also agree that it is important to take care of your employees and treat us well, professionally and personally.

I don't think any of us think this is true everywhere and none of us should take it for granted.

Also, the relationship between RCTA and district leadership is a uniquely positive one.

It has not always been like this, and it is not like this in most districts and teacher associations.

I hear the stories: I hear them from nearby districts, from those throughout the state, as well as other parts of the country.

While acrimony between associations and district leadership and school boards is more normal than not our district and RCTA are able to work together in a spirit of cooperation and respect.

We don't always agree, we don't solve every problem or fix every issue, and we make mistakes.

But, we try.

Our positive relationship and the efforts we make together are good for our students and for all those who take care of them every day.

As I start my ninth year in this role, I feel lucky to serve in this capacity representing colleagues who do good and important work each day, and to work with you all, in such a great school district.

It is good to be here.