

Getting to Know Dr. Robert Fraser, CRSD Superintendent

Citizens For Education sat down recently with Council Rock's new superintendent Dr. Robert Fraser to discuss the first three months in his new role and both short and long term goals for the school district. We came away excited to hear about Dr. Fraser's enthusiasm and energy for taking Council Rock to the next level. His slogan, "All roads lead to the classroom," sets the tone for a continual focus on CRSD students and their needs from every member of CRSD's staff.

Dr. Fraser's educational philosophy revolves around his belief that teaching is an art as well as a science, oftentimes more art than science. He believes in curriculum equality across schools, with sufficient commonality, equal rigor, and consistent grading practices, alongside the allowance for and encouragement of each teacher's individual style of teaching. Motivating, inspiring, and training teachers is paramount, as is giving teachers flexibility to be creative in how they do their jobs.

Dr. Fraser emphasized his two primary short term goals: (1) Get to know staff, teachers, students, parents, and community members and build relationships to establish a foundation built on mutual respect and trust; and (2) Learn anything and everything about the district. In addition, Dr. Fraser promotes transparency in all CRSD efforts and has worked with the School Board to institute the recording of district committee meetings for playback on CRSD's YouTube channel.

Dr. Fraser has set some ambitious long term goals. He will be leading the effort across the district to put CRSD in the top 1% of all districts in all areas, from excellence in the business office to the quality of the teachers, from athletics to maintenance, from the drama and other arts programs to the human resources department, and more. Achieving and sustaining systemic excellence in every way possible, says Dr. Fraser, is the future of Council Rock.

There are challenges to that goal, however, and primary among them are the unfunded and time consuming mandates handed down by the federal and state government to CRSD and other districts. These include Educator Effectiveness, the teacher and principal evaluations; the Keystone exams, of which a 2-year moratorium may be in the works; and the state's fair funding formula which greatly impacts CRSD from a financial perspective. Dr. Fraser is hopeful that the new PA Secretary of Education, Pedro A. Rivera, will be helpful in resolving many of these challenges.

With the district's recent focus on capital planning and future redistricting, Dr. Fraser is optimistic that if the CRSD community as a whole focuses on what is best for the kids, staying respectful and transparent throughout the process, all will work out. His school size philosophy does not require a specific number of students per school, as he has seen large and small schools work well; instead, his objective is to use space as efficiently as possible from a teaching and learning perspective while minimizing cost and maximizing value for the taxpayers.

Dr. Fraser stated that a district Technology Committee has been formed, comprising teachers, parents and community members, to provide a focus for discussing instructional technology issues and plans. Committee meetings will be open to the public and will be recorded on the district's YouTube channel. One topic to be discussed is alternatives to Moodle as a Learning Management System. Although Moodle is a free platform, it is not commonly used by colleges so CRSD is looking for a system that will prepare students for what they will use in college.

Dr. Fraser stated, "Every conversation begins and ends with students," and this was evident in CFE's conversation with Council Rock's new superintendent. CFE thanks Dr. Fraser for taking time to talk with us.