

Tammy Mangus, Superintendent of Schools

Dear Members of the Monticello Community,

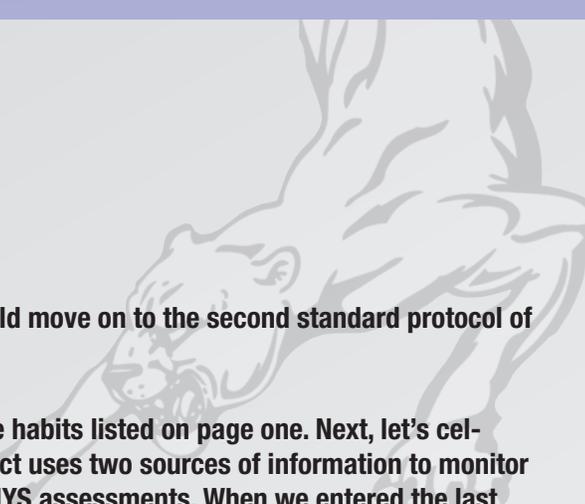
Happy New Year! It may seem unusual to hear this in September, but it has been my experience that we actually celebrate this grand event several times a year in our culture, and there are certain aspects of the event that are “standard protocol” as part of the celebration. These standard protocols include:

- **Reminiscing about the prior year’s memories**
- **Bringing folks together to celebrate the event**
- **Resolving to make improvements in order to allow our lives to be richer**

Here in the world of education, our New Year protocols are no different.

Let’s take a moment to remember our school district’s journey last year. In September, the district made a resolution to focus on three things. First, we wanted to ensure that the lessons we delivered aligned to the expectations set forth by the Common Core State Standards. Second, we wanted to make decisions based off of evidence, facts and data as opposed to emotional reactions. Third, we were excited to build engaging learning environments that allowed students to do to learn as opposed to learning to do. These three focus points acted as the frame for Essential Questions tied to Essential Habits, which acted as our focus points each month in order to move our district forward. The Essential Habits for the 2013-2014 school year included:

- **Knowing that when faced with failure, we learn a lot about what we need to do in order to improve. Therefore, we should never give up! The work may be hard, but every unsuccessful attempt presents a way to build a plan to try again.**
- **Making every effort to be better tomorrow than we are today.**
- **Believing that what really matters is not where we are, but how we will grow. Sometimes we get so caught up in the distance between where we are and where we want to be that we get frustrated before we even begin.**
- **Knowing that every great journey is made up of small incremental steps will certainly help us maintain hope while we are on our journey.**
- **Demonstrating grit. We must know that we are tougher than we give ourselves credit for most of the time, so we must see things through no matter how difficult the path may seem.**
- **Finding the bright spot in difficult situations, because hope is viral, but so is negativity. Happiness and kindness matter. Be happy and kind every day.**



Now that we've taken a walk through last year's memories, we should move on to the second standard protocol of each New Year and celebrate as a community.

First, let's celebrate the strong culture we began to build through the habits listed on page one. Next, let's celebrate where these ideals brought our students. Each year, our district uses two sources of information to monitor student growth as opposed to student achievement, the NWEA and NYS assessments. When we entered the last school year, we found that our student's growth on both of these assessments for the previous year (2012-2013), was less than the average growth of students across the state. As a result, we committed to building a growth-mind set into ourselves and our students. To do this, we created a New Year's resolution that we would build positive, growth oriented habits into our daily lives (the habits you see listed on the first page).

It is with great pleasure and honor that I can report to you that the return on the investment in our resolution is that both assessments show that our students in the 2013-2014 school year not only grew at an average rate, **they grew at a greater than average rate!** To show this much marked improvement in just one year is absolutely commendable. Our community, our students and our staff should be proud of this accomplishment.

Each day Monticello educators must be innovative, creative and dynamic to break away from the average and yield a high level of success for our students.

Finally, let's create new resolutions to ensure that we continue to grow in the coming year. Our Essential Question that will frame what we do in the 2014-2015 school year is:

Are you radical enough to continue to make a difference?

With all of this in mind, it is without hesitation that I present to you this year's Essential Habit. We must commit to be greater than the average. After all, we are Monticello. Don't we deserve to be?

Be well,

Tammy Mangus
Superintendent of Schools