

LETTER FROM JONATHAN RAYMOND TO COLLEAGUES IN THE SACRAMENTO CITY UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT FOLLOWING UP ON THE CROSS-DISTRICTS LEARNING EVENT IN NASHVILLE

Dear Colleagues:

This week several of us from SCUSD traveled to Nashville to meet with representatives from seven other school districts to share our work and what we've learned on bringing social and emotional learning to our community, district, schools and classrooms. One of the group exercises we did was to write something below our name tags which we wanted our old and new friends to ask us about. Below my name, I made a dot. More on that later.

While in Nashville, our team, which consisted of administrators, teachers, a representative from our teachers union and PTA leadership, visited schools to watch effective practices such as Morning and Closing Meetings, a strategy that is part of the powerful Responsive Classroom movement. Responsive Classroom is an approach to teaching that builds a positive learning environment. These practices give teachers tools and strategies to help make their classrooms safe, supportive and engaging places to learn while children learn to see their successes, establish goals and manage their emotions and relationships. It is powerful to see the way adults and children interact and speak to each other!

Our work in Sacramento to infuse these practices into our daily school life and interactions is just beginning, although long overdue not only here but throughout our country and in the rest of public education. Gone are the days where we can fool ourselves into thinking we are preparing children for college, careers and life by just focusing on academics. We as adults must teach, model and practice the very skills we expect our children to have and that the world demands they master. Confidence, perseverance, recognizing and controlling emotions, goal setting, empathy, civility, grace, building and nurturing relationships and making good decisions are essential skills for us AND our children.

Fortunately we are partnered with seven other districts that are equally committed to making this a priority and learning from and with each other. I truly believe that what we have launched in Sacramento will create lasting transformation in public education. We can and must continue to make this work a priority even knowing this will take time and that we still have many questions such as how will we measure success in this work.

So back to my dot. One of our children's favorite books is "The Dot" by Peter Reynolds. It is about a young girl named Vashti and her art teacher and the power of belief and confidence. We were lucky enough to meet the author who signed a personal copy for us. In the front cover he wrote: "To the Raymond family, may you always keep making your mark!"

As parents, family members and educators we all want to give the children in our lives the skills and habits to make their mark. Social and emotional learning is a powerful tool to make this happen. The time for making social and emotional learning a reality is now!

Sincerely,

Jonathan P. Raymond  
Superintendent