Insight into Professional Learning Days

 Thought I’d provide a little insight for those wondering what goes on during Professional Learning Days in our district. Here’s a brief summary of what happened during our first staff development day, held September 8:

Parent-teacher conferences were discussed at Kennedy. Meeting and working with families lays the foundation for strong schools and communities. We know that having parents and community involved in our schools through parent teacher conferences, or other means, increases attendance, improves behavior and promotes higher academic achievement.

McKinley and Garfield staff discussed Aimsweb scores. Aimsweb is a screener (just as blood pressure is a screener in the medical field) that helps to identify problems in learning to read. After teachers review the screener they then do more diagnostic testing to see if intervention is needed.

Reading was the topic at Abilene Middle School with staff gaining insight on how all teachers, no matter their subject area, can be reading instructors. Multiple strategies were discussed in all of the areas. Casey Callis, AMS art teacher, discussed ways in which he incorporates vocabulary and reading comprehension in his art classes. So many times, it is assumed that the only classes that teach reading are the “reading” class but all of our teachers are teachers of reading. We sometimes use the catch phrase, “If students read, speak, write, and listen in your class then you are a reading teacher.”

Abilene High School staff was involved in Student Intervention Team discussions. Conversation centered around the best ways to help students achieve both academic and social success, and ways to keep students on track for graduation and the next steps in their lives.

 During the September 8th Professional Learning Day, I dropped in at the various schools and enjoyed hearing the professional conversations that occurred during staff development days. It was an affirmation that USD 435’s 2014-15 school year is off to a good start!