

2011 – 2012

A Year in Review

Dr. David Goodin



Spring-Ford Area School District

"Together We Can, Together We Will"



Throughout the 2011-12 school year, Spring-Ford Area School District's faculty, staff, educators and students embraced our new "Together We Can, Together We Will" theme and made it the cornerstone of their classroom teachings, extra-curricular activities, community outreach events and so much more.

This theme was not just words, but was a meaningful expression and demonstration of how our district was willing to go above and beyond every day.

As you will read in my report, the sentiment I had for my first year at Spring-Ford was "Together We Could and Together We Did."

School and Community

The Goal:

To foster open lines of communication among and between stakeholders in the Spring-Ford community to promote educational excellence.

The Path Toward Achievement:

Open and honest communication allows for an open exchange of ideas and ensures that all stakeholders are informed. This was one of my fundamental views as a former educator that continues to remain true to this day as a superintendent and as demonstrated in the initiatives I spearheaded in the following section:



"Together We Could and Together We Did"

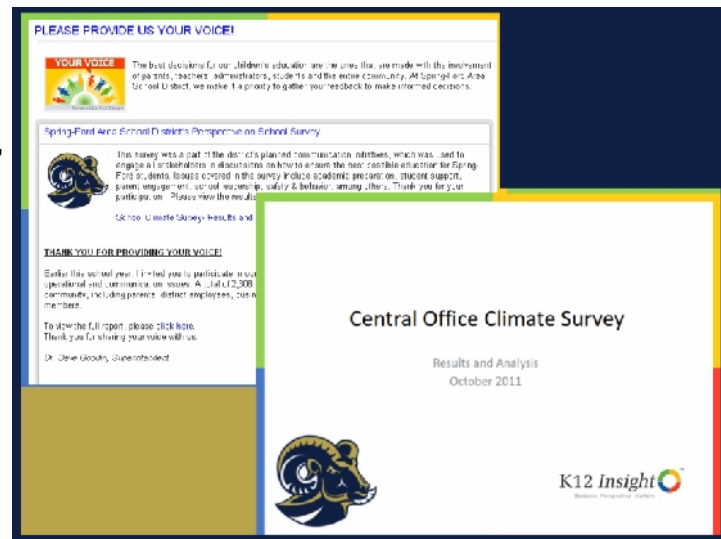
Parent, Student, Community and Staff Surveys Measure the District's Effectiveness

I invited Spring-Ford's key stakeholders together for a series of surveys that measured their perceptions of the district because I wanted to better understand their feelings about Spring-Ford's delivery of educational programs and services.

Throughout the 2011-12 school year, administrators, teachers, students, parents and community members shared their insight on what the district was doing well and some areas where they felt it needed to improve.

The overall response was phenomenal and generated feedback that will help us move our schools forward in a positive direction.

From those surveys, we learned the following: 87 percent of staff and 69 percent of parents gave the district ratings of "excellent" or "very good"; staff and parents tended to be satisfied with school operations, such as school bus and food services; and respondents were well aware of budget issues the district faced during the 2011-12 school year.



Engaging District Stakeholders to Advance District Goals



Throughout the year, I've had the pleasure to meet and speak with a number of groups, which helped me to learn more about what they do for our parents, students, educators and community.

One of those meetings – the Superintendent's/Parents' Advisory Council – served as an open forum that allowed parents to discuss any issues or concerns they had in their children's schools.

I also met monthly with the district's leadership council, cabinet members, and elementary and secondary principals to discuss their current plans and long-term goals relating to educating Spring-Ford's students, thus ensuring all parties share a common vision.

Meeting with Staff Members to Build Understanding, Trust and Motivation



New communication forums were also vital in creating a healthy discussion with representatives of the district's support staff.

During our bi-monthly Support Group Meetings, employees could raise issues of concern, and I was able to dispel any rumors circulating around the district.

I gained a better understanding of our support staff and their duties, while building bridges of cooperation and communication.

Through these productive gatherings, I also learned just how important feedback and recognition were to these individuals who play such a vital role in our schools every day.



Exchanging Ideas in the Blogosphere

During this school year, I launched a blog on the district's website titled "Dr. Goodin's Blog," which focuses on current and emerging education trends that could affect Spring-Ford.

Besides educating our teachers and community, the blog evoked a spirited dialogue, and I heard what others had to say on a given topic.

This blog showed that the Spring-Ford community is as passionate about education as I am and wants the best for the district's students.

Strong communication continued, of course, in all other informational outlets as well, including RCTV, the Spring-Ford LINK, the website and Board Notes.

Looking Ahead

Although I have achieved many of the communication goals I set this year, there are still some key ones on which I intend to focus my energies:

- More frequent and deeper conversations with the Spring-Ford Education Association, which I believe, can pave the way toward smooth negotiations in the future. Open lines of communication led to a new two-year contract for our educators. Fruitful discussions need to continue more regularly.
- Exploring new and innovative revenue streams is paramount in today's economy. This is why I am in the process of launching a business community outreach initiative which provides opportunities for local businesses in exchange for sponsorship dollars. Though still in its infancy, I believe this program has the potential to boost revenues and create win-win relationships between Spring-Ford and the business community.



Leadership

The Goal:

Build the leadership capacity with the administrative team, school board members and students.

The Path Toward Achievement:

Strong and effective leadership development creates a solid foundation for great schools and successful students.

Creative ways to foster and inspire leadership were identified and implemented. Some notable examples are highlighted below:



“Administrators With Class” Program Helps Improve Classroom Instruction

My newly implemented “Administrators with Class” program assigned principals and district-level administrators, including myself, to substitute for absent teachers once per marking period.

The program began as a way to close the gap that sometimes exists between theory and practice, and between those who are in the classroom regularly and building principals and district-level administrators who are not.

In just the first year, the program received remarkable feedback from educators and participants because it allowed my team to use their classroom experience to improve instruction and professional development.

In all, 25 administrators were involved with the program and had the opportunity to teach in classrooms. For most, it had been many years since they had this wonderful experience.

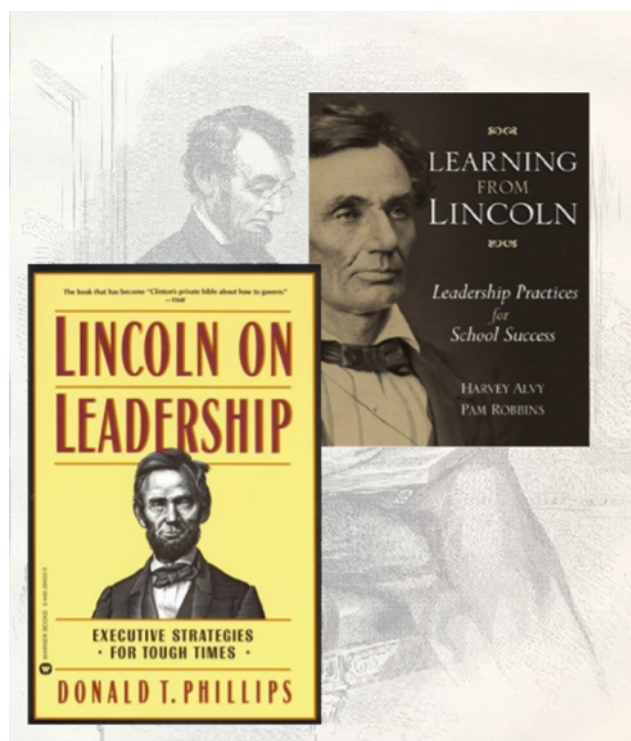
Administrators Learn from Former President Lincoln's Leadership Philosophies

I wanted to challenge our principals and the cabinet to explore different leadership qualities and how these methods could enhance education.

To accomplish this, I had our cabinet read "Lincoln on Leadership," a book that gives insight into our 16th president's management style.

Spring-Ford's principals also studied the former president's leadership approach by reading, "Learning from Lincoln."

After our administrators read these books, they took part in a series of discussions on the district's SchoolFusion page, where they exchanged ideas on how to apply what they learned from this great leader within Spring-Ford.



Positive Administration/School Board Relationship Important for District Success



As a superintendent and former administrator who has worked with school boards, I understand the importance of a positive, professional relationship between the district's leadership and its board leadership.

That is why this fall, school board members and administrators took part in a one-day retreat in the high school library to set expectations and share ideas.

A true team spirit was fostered, as all parties worked together to develop a clearer understanding of how to work together to accomplish shared goals.



Monthly Board Presentations Give a Glimpse into the Life at Spring-Ford's Schools

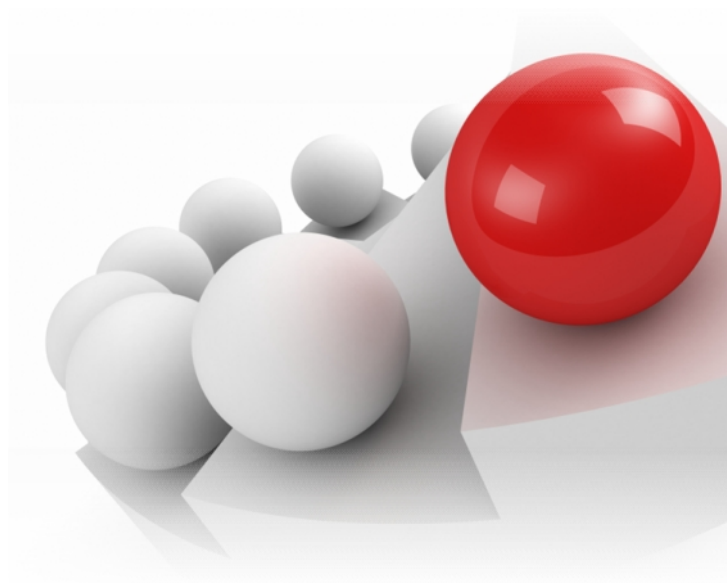
Leadership via example is spotlighted every time principals, teachers or students from one of our schools make a presentation at a school board meeting.

I asked each of our buildings to present on any topic they wanted during a board meeting this year. Each presentation brought new insight to all who heard it.

Whether it is the Dogs Are Readers Too (DART) program at Brooke Elementary School, Secret Agent Club at Royersford Elementary School or English as a Second Language (ESL) program at Oaks Elementary School, our administrators and teachers are equipping our students with life-altering learning opportunities and leading them on the path to success.

Looking Ahead

Building leadership is an ongoing process and it will continue to be one of my goals for administrators, educators and students in the coming year.



Student Education

The Goal:

Provide educational opportunities that prepare students with 21st century skills.

Fostering creativity and innovation, promoting critical thinking and problem solving skills, as well as communication and collaboration through the proper use of technology.

The Path Toward Achievement:

New approaches to education took center stage this year as Spring-Ford implemented programs designed to support 21st century learning and achievement. While the district awaits data to evaluate the success of our efforts to increase PSSA scores and grade level reading, here are two notable accomplishments related to student education:

Spring-Ford Virtual Academy Provides Students with a 21st Century Education Option

When the 2012-2013 school year begins, Spring-Ford will have its own cyber charter school.

The Virtual Academy was created to attract Spring-Ford students who are currently enrolled in either a cyber charter or traditional charter school.

During a more than three-year process of research and exploration, administrators worked diligently to create cyber curriculum tailored to students in grades seven through 12.

The program provides them with the opportunity to obtain a Spring-Ford education online, while at the same time, working toward earning a high school diploma.

Our collaboration with Pittsburgh-based VLN Partners allowed us to create a fine-tuned offering designed to maximize educational opportunities for all students, which includes extra-curricular activities, sports and social events.



Promoting Student Literacy at the High School

Encouraging high school students to read for pleasure can sometimes be viewed as a daunting, formidable challenge, especially when friends and technology seem like a more enjoyable alternative.

The district's Secondary Literacy Team took on the challenge of exploring different ways to encourage students to read and make it enjoyable.

Facilitated by high school teachers, principals and the district's Director of Curriculum and Instruction, the team met bi-weekly and discussed different strategies for increasing literacy throughout the senior high school.

From those meetings, educators created monthly RAM Periods, which suspended classes for 10 minutes, so students could read.



Strategic Mid-Point Review a Success Thanks to Input from Key Stakeholders



Earlier this year, administrators, teachers and community members completed the district's Strategic Plan mid-point review as required by the Pennsylvania Department of Education.

More than 40 people closely inspected Spring-Ford's plan over the course of three evenings to ensure that the district continues to remain on the right path toward achieving its goals.

Participants included students, staff, educators, administrators and the community.

Looking Ahead

- The district is invested in our newly created Virtual Academy and hopes to see it become a viable competitor against cyber charter and traditional charter schools through awareness-building.
- Our staff has begun curriculum development for our fifth- and sixth-grade programs, which will ensure the future growth of the Virtual Academy.

Staff Development

The Goal:

Ensure that professional staff is performing at the highest possible level.

The Path Toward Achievement:

Observation and evaluation are critical steps in transforming good teachers into great teachers.

This past year found Spring-Ford on the forefront of several unique initiatives developed to maximize the performance of our district's teachers.

Educator Observations Improve the Classroom Experience



When I began my education career, receiving constructive feedback based on observation was instrumental in improving my teaching abilities.

During the 2011-12 school year, our central administration adopted this philosophy and launched an observation initiative.

We conducted observations on all district-wide, non-tenured faculty members prior to them receiving tenure. In all, we undertook 31 observations, which allowed administrators to get a flavor for each of these educators' distinct teaching styles.

Through this process, we reaffirmed what Spring-Ford's expectations are for our teachers and established a positive working relationship between administrators and educators.

The yearlong observations provided teachers with external insight and critiques they can use to improve and enhance their daily classroom experience.

Spring-Ford Involved in State's Pilot Teacher Evaluation System

Eager to support the professional development goal set forth, Spring-Ford volunteered to participate in Pennsylvania Department of Education's pilot teacher evaluation system this year.

Our district, along with five other districts in Montgomery County, were selected to participate in the program where schools test the new system that could be mandated statewide in the future.

Educators and administrators were very receptive to the additional evaluation, especially since this program has the potential to boost an educator's performance, effectiveness and success in the classroom.

Launch of Teacher Peer Observation Program Yields New Ideas

Teacher-to-teacher peer observations were introduced this year as part of the “Administrators with Class” Program.

The experience was more positive than we could have hoped, as teachers gained new ideas from the teachers they had the opportunity to observe.



Looking Ahead

Professional development will continue to be a priority for Spring-Ford, as we explore best practices for observation and evaluation - all with the intention of fostering excellence among our fine educators. Helping our teachers develop and strengthen their skills should be a top priority because in the end, the students ultimately reap the rewards.



The Future for the Spring-Ford Area School District

The Goal:

Work with the administration and school board to develop a long-range vision for the Spring-Ford Area School District to prepare students for work and ongoing lifelong learning.

The Path Toward Achievement:

Regular goal-focused meetings between myself, the Assistant Superintendent, the Director of Curriculum and the Technology Director have focused on future planning. Some key areas under the plan's umbrella are well under way, as highlighted below:

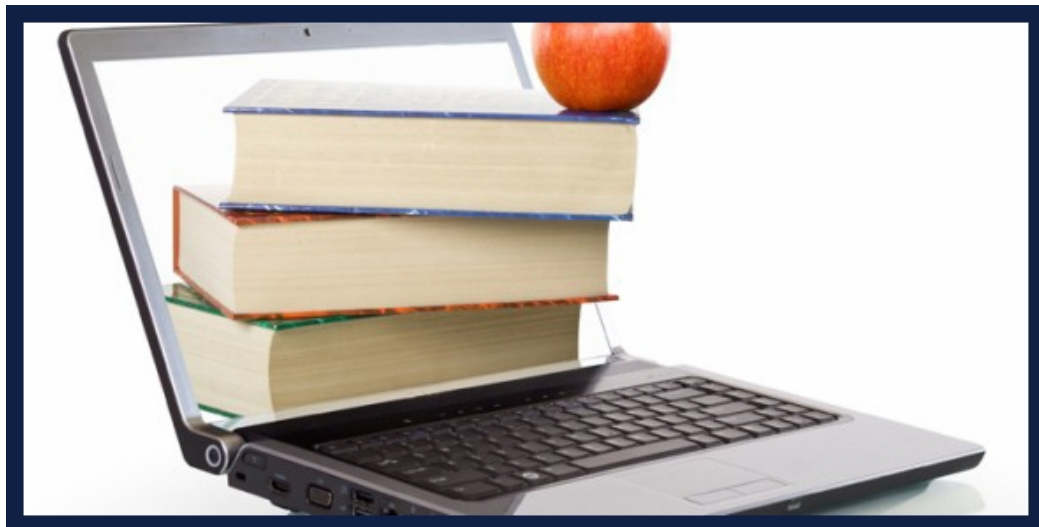
The Hybrid Learning Pilot Initiative

The Hybrid Learning Pilot Initiative that will be in place for the 2012-13 school year at Spring City Elementary will allow the District to explore an educational structure that moves beyond the four walls of the classroom and truly enter the 21st century learning environment.

The pilot program will allow teachers and students to explore new methods of instructional pedagogy and learning, while simultaneously building a foundation that leads directly to college and career readiness.

Our new hybrid initiative will have – at its core – a strong professional development component for, not only staff and educators, but for students.

The program also incorporates ongoing progress assessments to ensure that students are progressing at an appropriate level. We truly see that the Hybrid Learning Initiative has the potential to reshape the way we view the future of elementary education.



Virtual Academy

Create Virtual Academy that attracts non-traditional students, as was previously discussed on page 8 of this report.

Paperless Initiative

Spring-Ford is constantly evaluating its operations to see where it can streamline processes, save money and help the environment.

The district's paperless initiative has been a fine example of this.

Distributing report cards online; issuing Skyward alerts, instead of sending paper memos and letters home to parents; and emailing memos to staff are all part of this initiative.

Network printing is also being planned.



Broadened Language Offerings

At the high school, students immersed themselves in Mandarin Chinese this year thanks to a new virtual course that allows them to take in the country's language and culture with the click of a mouse.

MyChinese 360 is a language curriculum taught through a virtual instructor, who communicates with students through a Skype-like application, where they are given oral, written and other assignments.

Just this year, approximately 20 students in grades 10, 11 and 12 have enrolled and found promising results with their foray into this new language.

The goal over the next several years is to expand the mylanguage360 courses in Spring-Ford, and incorporate Spanish and sign language.

Global Studies

Inspired by the success of the Limerick-to-Limerick Exchange Program, the district is exploring the creation of a global studies track at Spring-Ford Area Senior High School.

Beginning in ninth-grade, the Institute would introduce students to foreign governments, economics and laws, and would cover other subjects – such as entrepreneurship, accounting and economics – in-depth as students move through their high school careers.

In their senior year, students would have the option to study abroad at a country of their choice for approximately one month. This program will allow students to see what is beyond Spring-Ford, and will prepare them for college and the 21st century global community.

In the coming school years, we will evaluate this program to see how it is benefiting our students, determine adding more international partnerships and decide whether to establish new course offerings.



Tech Infrastructure

Over the next year, the district will expand its wireless technology capabilities into all buildings, allowing students and educators to bring laptops, tablet computers and other devices into the classroom and use them for learning purposes.



Looking Ahead

- Moving forward, I will continue to map out action plans and strategic agendas on items that I believe we need to achieve and progress toward over the next five years in order to maintain our educational excellence and excel beyond that.
- Outlining a clear and concise vision will help the school board and administration understand where the district is going and what is needed to get there. Bi-annually, I will update the board on the district's progress toward these goals and review our strategies for accomplishing them.

Together, we will achieve this student-focused mission and improve our district along the way!

