



Dear Franklin Families,

During the winter break we have had the opportunity to reflect on semester one. We believe that education should be a reflective practice. As leaders in education, we must constantly make observations and own what we see. Just as important as observing the reality, is listening; not just hearing your stakeholders, but truly listening. Transformational leaders consistently make observations, listen intently, and then leverage a growth mindset. Most importantly, they take action to improve the organization.

Based on what we have seen and heard from you, we as administrators have adopted a 6 step plan that involves:

1. **Focusing on our mission and vision:** Our mission at Franklin Academy is to create life-long learners by developing critical thinking skills and promoting high levels of academic achievement in students, while meeting the benchmarks of a standards-based curriculum utilizing varied research-based instructional strategies, technologies, and media, with an emphasis on character development. Our vision as administrators is to instill “a Culture of Excellence.” Creating this culture requires excellence in the details, including student appearance, behavior on the bus, manners in the cafeteria, and of course, academics and discipline. This is the reason why we will continue to be very strict with respect to uniforms and the code of conduct. Our entire community including, staff, teachers, cafeteria personnel, and our Police Officer, have been included and very supportive of this vision.
2. **Embracing certain risks in order to facilitate the change needed:** We are fully aware that change makes people uncomfortable and understand and appreciate your concerns. However, change is necessary to create a culture of excellence amongst our staff as well. Excellence in a staff is both academic and professional. There are certain changes that occur that are outside of our control. Teachers have personal lives, which, at times, require them to resign unexpectedly. In addition to unavoidable events such as these, part of our responsibility is securing the correct personnel for the school culture and making changes when necessary. We assure you that these changes are for the betterment of the students both academically and communally.
3. **Adapting to situations effectively:** In order to secure the correct personnel, particularly during a time where there is a statewide teacher shortage, we have taken the following steps:
  - a. We have established a mentoring program to assist newly hired instructional staff in acclimating to the environment.
  - b. A first draft of the master schedule will be built in February thereby allowing us time to interview and hire as early as possible for the 2017-2018 school year. This allows us to select from a larger pool of quality applicants.
  - c. We have created relationships with local universities in order to recruit the best teacher graduates.
4. **Communication Concerns:** From day one, parents have expressed their desire to keep the lines of communication open and continuous. To do so we will be holding “Coffee with your Administrators” the second Wednesday of every month at 9:15 AM. For this January we will have our first meeting on Jan. 13<sup>th</sup> and a second meeting on Jan 25<sup>th</sup>. Beginning in February, we will schedule meeting for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday. This provides an opportunity to speak with the

entire leadership team. Additionally, it is Franklin Academy's policy that teachers are required to answer parent emails within 48 hours. Please inform administration if this is not occurring. We continue to improve our school website, adding activities including sports, chess, and music events. Our weekly newsletter is posted on the website as well as emailed to all our families. We have also moved every teacher to "Weebly" to facilitate usage for parents by using the same website.

5. **Develop and articulate a vision about the future needs of students to ensure that all students meet the expectations:** We have had quarterly student assemblies recognizing academic achievements and character excellence. We are applying for candidacy for the International Baccalaureate program (IB) at the elementary level. The IB Program focuses on the development of the whole person as an inquirer, both in the classroom and in the world outside. It provides a framework of learning that encourages students to become creative, critical, and reflective thinkers while fostering the development of skills for communication, intercultural understanding, and global engagement that are essential for life in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.
6. **Work with our faculty, staff, and students in a manner that ignites their passions, talents, and desires to attain our vision of a School of Excellence:** This vision is full circle. While our students are preparing academically, there are many other aspects of a students' growth that we attend to as a school community. Health screenings will take place beginning in January. Our sports programs are now well underway. Our clubs are diverse and active. Our Chess team continues to impress and grow. We have tremendous talent in our performing artists. We are looking forward to "the Adventures of Tom Sawyer" which will involve our drama, art, and music students.

We believe as leaders that the foundation is now set to transform our school's culture into one of excellence. This is a collaborative effort amongst ourselves and you, our families. It is our responsibility to take the actions necessary to reach future-oriented goals while meeting the intellectual, emotional, and physical needs of each student. We hope that you have seen our feverish work ethic and our intentions as leaders to consistently make observations, listen intently, leverage a growth mindset, and most importantly, take action to improve our school. As Benjamin Franklin has stated, "Energy and persistence conquer all things". We wish you a wonderful new year and we thank you for your continued support! See you in 2017!

All the best,

Ivy Benardo  
Principal

Margaret Ellis  
Assistant Principal

Stephanie Muzzillo  
Assistant Principal

Brian Jones  
Director of School Operations