January is School Board Recognition Month in Oregon, and I hope the Springfield community will join us in recognizing the five dedicated members of the Springfield School Board for the valuable contributions they make to our school district and to our community.

What does a school board do? Broadly speaking, it’s the board’s job to support student achievement by creating a vision for where we want to go as a district and keeping us on track to get there. Board members represent a vital link to the community, and they hold us as educators accountable for our students’ continued progress.

We are so grateful to have a school board that goes above and beyond these primary functions and routinely does whatever it takes to support our vision: Every Student a Graduate Prepared for a Bright and Successful Future.

Among their accomplishments in recent years, school board members were instrumental in helping get the community’s support for improving our facilities and making our new schools a reality. The result was the 2006 bond measure that has made all of our schools better equipped to serve our students. We have created an educational environment that we truly can be proud of.

The board’s leadership was essential last year in underscoring the focus on minimizing the impact on the core instructional day while the district navigated the uncharted waters of a $15 million budget reduction. The resulting collaborative effort galvanized staff trust and has been praised by fellow educators.

An article even has been written about our successful approach, published in the fall 2009 issue of Education Northwest Magazine.

The board’s support for the Springfield Education Foundation has resulted in a revitalized, energetic organization that provides another valuable link to the community, as well as resources to our schools.
The board continues to drive for increased literacy throughout the district through programs such as Battle of the Books and Gift of Literacy.

Gift of Literacy gained the board national recognition last year with the American School Board Journal’s 2009 Magna Award. The Magna Award is given annually to only one district in our enrollment category. It is awarded in recognition of the board’s involvement in an outstanding program that fosters student achievement while engaging community involvement.

Our board members work continually toward increasing our student achievement, which they know is key to realizing our vision of Every Student a Graduate Prepared for a Bright and Successful Future. The board has been guiding and supporting us in building a success model for all students that uses innovative practices to impact student achievement.

Our teachers are using a data-driven system organized around a research-based core literacy program. We have created schedules that allow more opportunities for students to excel or receive additional interventions.

The Arts Matter initiative is bringing more opportunities and resources to use in integrating the arts into classroom learning. We are exploring aggressively the use of online learning as a promising practice to support and supplement our current programs.

The board’s support doesn’t stop at twice-monthly meetings in the boardroom. Our board members also participate in various subcommittees and related activities, and also can be seen regularly at schools, sporting events, fundraisers and open houses.

So thank you Laurie Adams, Nancy Bigley, Al King, Jonathan Light and Garry Weber for donating your time to make dreams come true for our Springfield students and our community.

Nancy Golden is superintendent of the Springfield School District. Team Springfield is a collaboration of the city of Springfield, Springfield School District, Springfield Utility Board and the Willamalane Park and Recreation District, which provide this column on a rotating basis.

Copyright © 2010 — The Register-Guard, Eugene, Oregon, USA