

# Superintendent's Report

December 14, 2017, Board Meeting

Staff who are...

**Positive \* Professional \* Passionate**

Focused on ...

**Relationships \* Morale \* Improvement of Instruction**



Dear Board Members, Staff Members, Families, and Community Members,

As we finish the first semester of the school year, I would like to thank our students, staff, families, and community for working together to make a difference in the lives of one another through care and support. I am especially thankful for our staff members, who have been studying how to become trauma informed in our interactions with others. We spent time together last week during our early dismissal watching the movie, Paper Tigers. Paper Tigers follows a year in the life of Lincoln Alternative High School which radically changed its approach to disciplining its students after the principal learned about the Adverse Childhood Experiences Study. That is the same ACE's information Hoopeston Area Staff learned about during our Institute in August.

"Stressed brains can't learn." That was the nugget of neuroscience that the principal of Lincoln took away from an educational conference in 2010. Three years later, the number of fights at Lincoln were down by 75% and the graduation rate had increased five-fold. Despite many challenges, the students at Lincoln High found the support they needed at Lincoln to make academic progress and find less destructive ways of coping.

While we watched this documentary about an alternative high school, we were reminded that there are children struggling socially and emotionally at all levels throughout our educational system, right here in Hoopeston. Children in trauma become teenagers in trauma who become adults in trauma. Therefore it is essential that we work together as a school and community to help students at all levels learn coping skills and receive the support they need to not just survive but thrive.

That commitment to the wellbeing of our students and community is a blessing for which I am thankful. I wish you all a wonderful holiday season with a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year! Many thanks for the opportunity to serve this great district and all who live here!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Suzette Hesser".

Suzette Hesser

Superintendent, Hoopeston Area School District