

SCHOOL ZONE

Honor shows Morrison is a spark for change

Everyone knows by now that Heath Morrison, Washoe County School District's superintendent, has won the American Association of School Administrators' National Superintendent of the Year. This is a well-deserved honor for him and to our more than 7,400 employees who have helped make our district what it is today and what it will be tomorrow. I was president of the Board of Trustees when we hired Heath, and we made it clear that we wanted our district to take the leap to the next level — from good to great. To accomplish this, Heath has been a relentless worker, and so have those who work at the district and school levels. Great does not happen through theory alone but through many, many long hours. The sacrifices of our employees cannot be understated.



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CLARK

Heath has brought innovation and accountability, making changes where needed and building on what was already here. Every department, school and program has been looked at, and there have been changes at each — some minor, some major. Change is not easy, but as Nobel laureate Andre Gide said, "Man cannot discover new oceans unless he has the courage to lose sight of the shore."

It took courage for the Board of Trustees to hire Heath. We felt pressure from many sides, including some who did not want change. It takes courage for Heath to implement reforms, and it takes courage for our employees to step out of their comfort zones.

It has not yet been three full years since we hired Heath, and I often think of us as on a space shuttle shooting for the stars. Heath is our rocket boosters. Rocket boosters provide 83 percent of liftoff thrust and power the shuttle to 42 miles above the earth's surface before separation. Sitting in the shuttle, your emotions alternate between fear and excitement. However, you know you are going on an adventure where few have gone before. There's a chance we may not make it because it is very difficult for urban school districts to turn around, but as Wayne Gretzky says, "You miss 100 percent of the shots you never take."

I am so glad we are on this journey. There is nothing more important to us, our students, their families and our community than to have "every child, by name and face, to graduation." I believe we can reach this goal. Thank you, Heath, for giving our school district a shot at great.

Barbara Clark is a member of the Washoe County School District Board of Trustees.