

## HOPE 2.0

March 23, 2018

### Swimming Upstream

Dr. Rishi Manchanda, a physician and public health innovator, is known as a “upstreamist”. In his TED Talk entitled *What makes us sick? Look upstream*, Dr. Manchanda shares the parable in which three friends observe babies floating downstream in a river. The first friend immediately begins to grab the babies from the river, vowing to save those in immediate danger of going over a nearby waterfall. Despite this friend’s efforts, many babies continue to escape his grasp. The second friend weaves a network of branches to build a raft, pulling even more babies to safety but long term, still unable to pull every child from the rushing river. As the first two friends work feverishly to save precious lives, they look to their third friend to join their efforts, but soon find that she has left the area. Finally, they spot her swimming upstream and yell, “Hey, where are you going? We have lives to save here!”, to which the third friend replies, “I’m going upstream to find out who or what is throwing these babies into the water”.

Let’s consider the elephant that we committed to address in our district: behavior, both student and adult. In a previous HOPE Note I shared outcomes from two of our initial all HOPE Teams meetings. The first meeting was held January 11<sup>th</sup> followed by our second meeting on February 22<sup>nd</sup>. Most recently, a subcommittee met on March 20<sup>th</sup>.

This week’s meeting began with a review of a list of quick fixes (things we could address before the end of the school year) identified in our February meeting. Approximately 45 minutes into our discussion, we learned that very few items truly qualified as quick fixes. Further, we respectfully disagreed on multiple points, many of those disagreements based upon professional experiences and personal beliefs. We quickly realized that we could not effectively address quick fixes until we established shared norms for student and staff behaviors across the district. So, we began to establish those norms during the second half of our meeting. On Monday, March 26<sup>th</sup>, we will refine that list and then develop action steps for the communication, training and deployment of our shared norms to all stakeholders within the district (parents, students, staff, and board members). We are now fully entrenched in step 3 of our Leadership Model (see previous HOPE Notes).

For some, our approach may bring the frustration felt by the first two friends when watching the third swim upstream as they scurried to pull children from the water. However, as Dr. Manchanda notes, we must look upstream in order to identify the core of our behavioral issues within the district. Following this week’s meeting, I encouraged committee members to keep swimming upstream with us. In the spirit of full transparency, I also expressed that there would be times when they would long to seek refuge on the shore, exiting the river altogether. Likewise, some of you will want to do the same as we continue this journey. This work is not for the faint of heart. However, stay the course and just watch how many lives we save. Keep moving upstream.

Enjoy your weekend!

Tamara Willis, Ph.D.  
Superintendent

If you would like to watch Dr. Manchanda's TEDtalk, please visit <https://youtu.be/dJEwC4wCM70>.

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### **Piece of the Puzzle**



Please join me in thanking Ms. Danae Klock at the Middle School helping staff navigate PVAAS reporting. PVAAS reporting can be a logistical nightmare, but tackling this process with a newly adopted SIS can be daunting. Thank you for trouble shooting and supporting the team through the process!

Also, we'd like to recognize Mrs. Denise Short for "holding down the fort" in the counseling office while we have been short staffed. Thank you to fellow counselors from other buildings for being willing to pitch in where needed and continuing to support the team. We appreciate you all!