

## **Dr. Matthew J Hutcheson, Superintendent**

### **Jeannette City School District**

As a school superintendent the daily challenges that arise can affect the path of the District especially given the recent cuts that have forced us to make drastic cuts to many programs while still attempting to provide the students of the Commonwealth with a strong educational foundation. I feel very fortunate that as a District, the board and I did not have to furlough any staff, but through attrition we lost 2 administrative positions, one teaching position, two support staff and a library aide. This is was a challenge given the importance of libraries but the need to provide additional educational supports necessitated these changes.

The staffing cuts are only part of the issue facing the Districts. The Districts are being forced to assign additional duties to the librarians, which takes away from the time available to provide the support and assistance to staff and students to promote a quality reading program. The bigger challenge is the loss of funding which supports the purchase of books and other resources necessary to provide the students with a strong foundation and love of reading. The lack of financial support becomes very evident as Districts review the age of their collection. Districts are forced to make crucial choices between limiting the resources available to the libraries or losing staff while prolonging textbook purchases. One of the greatest deficits for our library comes in the maintenance of technical books. As each of us sits here with your smart phones and laptops our students are left with collections that have an average age of 1995 at the elementary and 1977 at the high school. As we all realize technology along with society has drastically changed since 1977, but these are the materials that students are use for their reference and career choice activities. A few samples of this from our collection is that the average age of the high school collection for geography is 1975 and biographies and auto biographies is 1993. Schools are facing additional challenges through the loss of the resources previously available through Power library since they do not have the ability to purchase other data bases. Previously grant programs such as Classrooms for the Future did provide a source of funding that leveled the playing field for all schools.

- The elementary librarian has made some important statements that I would like to have added to this testimony: "Because of budget cuts I am forced to decide between curricular support materials and enjoyable reading materials for the students - in order to keep them excited about reading (all grades) we need not only books that are new and different to them but also books that keep them going in series or get them started on the latest hot reading series. Because of the make-up of our student population (high poverty level), many of our students have no access to a library or any books other than what I have here for them. Even though the community has a public library, the students who need it the most are not given the opportunity to go while at home. When they can choose a book from our library and know it is the new popular thing everyone is talking about (example: Diary of a Wimpy Kid or Hunger Games) and that they can just come in here and get it the same as anyone else, it's a sort of game-changer - it levels the playing field for those students in a small but important way. My door is always open to help teachers and staff, but with the cut of the aide position and the additional classes that

have been added to my schedule, the time I have to offer to others has been severely diminished.

As schools are faced with meeting the common core it is imperative that the students have access to quality reference materials and staff support to meet these rigorous standards.

I would ask for your supports for libraries so that the students from these economically disadvantaged communities have access to the quality materials and staff to support their educational development. Learning is not just through their exposure to information through technology but having the physical and personal aspects to have that drive to move forward which comes from exposure to all of the resources available through our school libraries.