



May 1, 2013

Dear Key Communicator:

The child was only a couple weeks shy of his 10th birthday when he passed away, no longer able to fight the brain tumors and their devastating effects on his body.

There are a number of ways I could describe this young man. He was bright. He was full of energy. He was an avid baseball fan. He was a full-faced smile waiting to happen. And as I sat among those celebrating his all-too-short life at his funeral last week, I couldn't help but think of another important characteristic that defined him.

He was a public school student.

Before he had even turned 3, the child was receiving special education services from his local public school. The extent of his impairments required continual services from medical personnel, diagnosticians and therapists.

The beauty of our public education system is that we do what is necessary for our brightest students, those who are most challenged and everything in between – no questions asked. When our students are not initially successful, we find another way to help them succeed. We do whatever it takes until their needs are met.

When the child's parents first enrolled him in school, they knew he was only expected to live until about 4 or 5 years of age. Even so, the school only sought ways to make his life better. The excellent care, support and love he received from public educators allowed this young man to bless those around him for four more great years.

A comparison I often make is that public educators are modern-day missionaries, helping improve the lives of children from all backgrounds. Our teachers are being asked to do more today for our students than ever, and our students are leaving our schools with both a quality education and quality role models.

Although the child I referenced is no longer with us, the lesson he leaves behind is a valuable one. Every child matters, and we will care for each one who walks through our doors.

Sincerely,

Mark Henry, Ed.D
Superintendent of Schools