SME Principal’s Report to RISD Board for September:

We have gotten off to a very positive start to the school year. New faculty members are Andrew Stevenson (Grade 1), Melissa Hopper (Grades 3 & 4), Chris Cassell (Grades 3 & 4), Melissa Kelleher (Grade 5), Crystal Champagne (Grade 6), Jodi Lenning (Grade 6), Kristina Claflin (Physical Education), Miranda Garrow (Title 1 Mathematics), and Darla Sterett (long-term substitute in Kindergarten). New staff members are Jane Prescott (Administrative Assistant), Jeffrey Barrett (Learning Coach), and Bridget Simmons (Learning Coach). All of us worked extremely hard in making sure we were ready for the first day of school.

I am starting to implement systems and approaches that will improve school climate and culture. One example of this was the full day retreat Samuel Morey faculty and staff spent at the Montshire Museum on August 23rd. The morning was spent with the faculty and staff of Westshire Elementary School. Melissa Zoerheide and I lead team building activities and also had those present reflect on the upcoming year with questions to prompt their thinking. Melissa and I will revisit their responses to these questions as the year progresses. We ended our retreat by sharing a short story that I believe encapsulates the potential I see for SME, and the vision we will need as a group to make SME go from “good to great”. I thought it would be important to share this story with the you because I think it is important for you to understand where I am focusing my energy as the leader of SME this year and in the years to come. The story comes from the book The Power of Our Words: Teacher Language That Helps Children Learn by Paula Denton. I will end my report with the story.

The Spyglass

Once upon a time there was a poor kingdom of barren fields, broken-done homes, and ragged clothes. Here the people were also poor in spirit. They were full of complaints and general grumpiness. One day an old man traveling through this country asked its king for a place to stay the night. In exchange, he would show the king why the kingdom was in such bad condition. The king agreed. When it was time for the traveler to leave, he took the king to a high balcony in his run-down castle and handed him a spyglass.

*The king looked out through the glass. He could see great farms and gardens, magnificent castles and cathedrals...where there had been barren pasture there were now fields of grain stretching as far as the eye could see. His own people were in the fields, their wagons overflowing with their harvest...*

*But when the king put down the glass his kingdom looked the same as before.*

“Nothing has changed,” stated the king.

“No,” said the old man. “Change requires work. But one must first see before doing.”

*The king again raised the glass. “What greatness this kingdom holds,” he declared.*

“You have seen what might be,” said the old man. “Now go and make it so.”