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IMMEDIATE RELEASE
December 18, 2009

Moving Ahead to the New Year

By: David D. Baker, Ph.D.
Superintendent

As I reflect on the past year, we have had our share of challenges, but it is easy for me to put those behind me because of how good our entire school family is doing. In 2009 we once again achieved our excellent rating, we sustained another round of cuts and we delivered new facilities at no cost to our tax payers. Although we are pleased with the performance of our students, we are focusing now on our goals for 2010. This coming year we will focus on a number of initiatives that are going to be vital to our future success. Let me outline a few of these:

Improved Communication- I have heard through many sources that our community feels disengaged from the decisions being made in the district. Our goal is to break down some of our existing barriers and make sure we are hearing what the community expects from us. Many of the decisions that happen are the same decisions many of you would make if you were in our shoes. Unfortunately, because we don't do a great job of getting you the whole story in a timely and complete manner, there is a large amount of frustration. A communications committee has been formed and will meet for the first time in mid-January to let us know how we can improve. Notice I didn't say I formed this committee. I think sometimes we are guilty of always hearing from the same group of people. I have changed the playing field a little bit because I am not picking all of the players anymore. I want all of the feedback, not just the kind we are accustomed to hearing.

Updated Strategic Plan- The current Strategic Plan the district has was put together three years ago. This plan was labored over by a group of 25 to 30 community members that served on a steering committee. The hard work of this group was then followed up by the work of almost 100 people serving on various committees that hammered out the details of the plan. The hard work of this group must now be reevaluated under our current financial state and coordinated with the ability of the community to afford it. School districts are guilty in general of wanting the best for their students regardless of the cost. We are going to try to find the acceptable balance for this community that will keep our students educated at a superior level, but is still manageable for our taxpayers.

A Balanced Budget- With the help of the community and our Board of Education we will construct a Five Year Plan for the district that balances our budget. The obvious and first question from everyone is whether or not we will be on the ballot and how much will we ask for. That has not been decided yet and I think if we are going to be successful we must first identify a level of service that this community feels they want. It probably won't be what I want, but I am learning to set that aside and listen to what all of you expect and want from your school system. As we move in to 2010 we will have to engage a large part of the district to be sure we are clear on expectations. This is a real challenge for us because in these tough economic times everyone's definition of an adequate education has changed.

The three goals above are the initiatives I feel will allow us to be more successful for 2010. With the support of our community we will break down some of the past barriers that have prevented us from being good listeners. The key to accomplishing these goals is you, the taxpayers of our district. We must all band together next year to assure our success. We will continue to expect you to provide feedback and direction on a regular basis. Please start today by dropping me a line on whether or not you feel we are heading in the right direction. I can always be reached at dbaker@springboro.org.

Have a restful and joyful holiday break with your families.

Be Safe,
Dr. Baker