



90-Day Check-In: Listening, Learning, and Leading Forward with Superintendent Mike Crocco

Reflections on my first three months with CTECS and why I'm optimistic about the future.



Introduction

As I complete my first 90 days with CTECS, I am thankful for the work happening across the system and optimistic about the future. These first months have been about listening, learning, and building relationships. Through conversations with educators and central office staff, and time with some teachers and school leaders, I have come to appreciate the uniqueness of CTECS and the extraordinary talent, dedication, and pride that runs through this system.

I believe our strength lies in three foundational priorities that emerged through reviewing district policies, documents such as the District Improvement Plan, Strategic Operating Plan, and Vision of a Graduate, and engaging in conversations with a wide range of stakeholders including school and district leaders, teachers, parents and community members. These are not isolated ideas, but consistent themes that reflect what matters most to the people who make CTECS what it is. I will use these priorities as a guide for my observations and decision making moving forward.



Teaching & Learning

Every student, in every school, deserves access to high-quality instruction in both academics and trade areas and the supports needed to succeed. By focusing on data, collaboration, and continuous improvement, we will strengthen Tier 1 instruction, deepen our understanding of student progress, and keep our attention squarely on outcomes.



Social-Emotional Health

Students and staff thrive when they feel seen, supported, and valued. We are committed to fostering a culture of restorative practices, transparency, and no-fault problem-solving that balances care with high expectations. Schools where consistency, clarity, and trust are cornerstones make it possible for everyone to do their best work.



Administrative Operations

Strong systems create the foundation for strong schools. Over the next year, we will focus on safety, clear communication, and alignment of resources with priorities. We will bring coherence to critical processes—from scheduling and hiring to dual enrollment and work-based learning opportunities—so that every student benefits equally.

What I have seen so far reinforces my belief that by working side by side - listening, learning, and acting with purpose, we can ensure that CTECS is a place where students and staff alike can flourish. Ultimately, student outcomes will be the measure of our success.

First 90 Day Recap

What I've Learned and Accomplished So Far



Teaching and Learning

- Identified a need for stronger foundational structures to ensure cohesion across the district. Two examples that stand out:
 - Senior experience: The support seniors receive to track their progress varies significantly by school, leading to stress and confusion later in the year.
 - Scheduling: Timelines for scheduling differ across schools, often stretching into the summer, making it harder to assess needs and resolve issues early.
- Participated in an administrative retreat and the Title I retreat, gaining deeper insight on how school leadership teams collaborate, make decisions and align their work with district priorities.
- Observed how initiatives are communicated and adapted at the school level, highlighting both strengths in teamwork and opportunities to strengthen coherence across the system.
- Visited half of our schools and met all educational leaders. Educational leaders have been open, honest, and receptive in sharing both successes and challenges.
- Special education must remain a priority, with a focus on refresher training on laws and processes, and a review of programming, staffing, and contracted services.
- Reviewed the math progression and our approach to instruction.
- Met with nearly all central office staff and will be meeting with the remaining consultants and supervisors soon, to build a stronger understanding of roles and needs.





Social Emotional Learning

- Safety will remain a priority. We will conduct safety audits at each school, monitoring their completion, and track adherence to safety procedures to ensure they are communicated and practiced consistently.
- Gained insights into the inclusion of restorative practices at schools and am eager to see them in action.
- Attended graduations at Emmett O'Brien, Goodwin, Platt, and Abbott and was impressed with the level of student accomplishments and future plans.



Administrative Operations

- Learned the need for a review of current policies and lack thereof. A policy team has since been established at CO and updated policies will be issued throughout the year with training as needed.
- Learned through this year's teacher transfer process that we need to improve documentation and feedback practices.
- After several years of significant change, people are eager for transparency, consistency, clarity, and improved communication. We need to move forward starting from a place of no-fault problem solving, even when we don't fully agree.
- Learned a great deal about our admissions process, how it has changed through the years and how it impacts our service to students.
- Reviewed existing contracts and grant spending established for the 25-26 school year.

Early Wins

Over the last 90 days, I've focused on building relationships and meeting regularly with central office staff to better understand our strengths, challenges, and needs. I believe we are stronger when we work together, and these conversations have already led to a number of early wins.

To stay connected and keep momentum going, I've set up a series of weekly and bi-weekly meetings, and participate in others, with key staff:

- **Schoolwide Issues and Teaching and Learning:** Weekly with Dr. Menounos, Mr. Cavallaro, and Mrs. Walsh.
- **Special Education:** Weekly with Mrs. Gianelli-Allen to plan programming and problem-solve complex issues.
- **Executive Director's Executive Team:** Weekly with leaders from Finance, HR, Legal, Chief of Staff, and Communications to strengthen cohesion and communication across all departments.
- **Vacancies and Hiring:** Weekly with HR, Finance, and the Executive Director to track position control, speed up hiring, and improve clarity around new positions versus refills.
- **Labor Relations:** Weekly with Legal and Labor Relations, EEO, HR, and the Executive Director to address labor relations issues, complaints, and disciplinary matters.
- **Facilities:** Bi-weekly to assess facility needs including school construction, building, custodial and maintenance issues, as well as IT, safety and security infrastructure.

Early wins from this work include:

- Helping to address and clear a backlog of complaints and disciplinary actions through the weekly labor relations meetings.
- Contributing to a more structured, transparent hiring process that differentiates new positions from refills and works to shorten timelines.
- Establishing a district improvement team to ensure the district improvement plan aligns with each school's improvement plan, strengthening cohesion while respecting each school's unique needs, and creating a process to monitor progress and update plans based on what is and isn't working.
- Working with a team to Submit five School Improvement Grants (SIG) focused on enhancing instruction and student supports.
- Hired new leadership for Platt, Prince and Wilcox Technical Schools.

The Next 90 Days

Where We're Headed and What We'll Be Watching Closely

Over the next three months, I will continue listening and learning by spending intentional time in every school. These visits will allow me to see firsthand how our schools operate, hear directly from staff and students, and better understand the systems and conditions that support or hinder learning. This time in schools will help shape how we move forward and ensure that our direction is grounded in real experiences. My goal is to visit every school by Thanksgiving.

Here are the actions I'll be taking and the data I am keeping an eye on:



Teaching and Learning

- Monitor the impact of embedded coaching by reviewing school leader feedback and classroom observation data.
- Evaluate the quality and consistency of Tier 1 instruction through participation in instructional rounds.
- Analyze PSAT, SAT and quarterly assessment data to surface instructional trends and areas of student need.
- Review implementation progress of proficiency scales and how they're shaping classroom instruction and expectations.
- Monitor absenteeism and failure rates by grade level, with particular attention to high-needs students.
- Use insights gathered during school visits to deepen understanding of how curriculum in both trades and the academics, instruction, and leadership are experienced at the school level.
- Look into ways we can make academics and trades cohesive and support one another.
- Analyze staff satisfaction and retention and identify areas for improvement in collaboration with teacher and administrative union leadership.
- Pay particular attention to compliance and programing in special education providing supports and professional learning where needed.





Social Emotional Learning

- Review completion and follow-up of safety audits across all campuses to ensure systems are in place and acted upon.
- Monitor the implementation of restorative practices and gather feedback on their impact on student behavior and school culture.
- Evaluate how Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) supports are structured and communicated, listening to student and staff voice around emotional well-being and school connectedness.
- Identify promising school-based practices that contribute to strong climate and culture for possible system-wide sharing.



Administrative Operations

With the Executive Director and the Executive Team:

- Monitor the pace and efficiency of hiring processes, especially for positions critical to school functioning and student success.
- Evaluate how school-level concerns, complaints, and operational issues are being tracked and resolved.
- Assess whether district spending is aligned to core priorities, specifically in instruction, SEL, and safety.
- Review systems in place for Individualized Education Program (IEP) and compensatory service tracking to ensure legal compliance and service fidelity.
- Use school visits as a lens to better understand how central office decisions are implemented and felt at the school level.

