



Dorchester County
Public Schools
Every Child A Success!

SUPERINTENDENT'S STAFF BULLETIN

Henry V. Wagner Jr., Superintendent

September 1, 2010

Volume 1, Issue 3

Our **System-wide Synergy** event on Friday, August 20, has been described by so many as an exciting and inspiring way to begin the 2010-2011 school year. The performances by our instrumental and vocal students energized us all, and the messages about service to others conveyed by **Danielle Cox, Crystal Owens, and Sadie Lockhart** connected us to our mission. Finally, ten-year old **Dalton Sherman** of Dallas, Texas, reinforced the vital role that believing in children (“**Do you believe in me?**”) and in one-another will have in our anticipated progress this year.

The Executive Team would like to extend special thanks to **Rodney Lee, Mike Hughes, Sabra Steward, Maureen Konopka, Trish Vickers, Chris Dayton, Shirley Marshall, Mary Edmiston, Brenda Davis, David Wheeler, Jayme Weeg, Gage Thomas, Dina Scarpino, Danielle Cox, Crystal Owens, Sadie Lockhart, Dalton Sherman**, and all **Dorchester County Public School Staff** in attendance for making this such a memorable event.

That energy and spirit clearly carried-over to the first week of school. Throughout our travels around the County, we saw eager students learning important things from day one at the direction of caring and dedicated staff. What an excellent start to the 2010-2011 school year!

Race-To-The-Top/Breakthrough Center

Now that **Maryland** has secured \$250 million of competitive funding through the **Race-To-The-Top (RTTT)** program, the next step will be for MSDE to determine how the funds will be distributed and utilized on behalf of children. The general categories of statewide reform include:

- Revise the **PreK-12 Maryland State Curriculum**, assessments, and accountability system based on the **Common Core Standards** to assure that all graduates are college-and-career-ready. The State Board in June endorsed the Common Core Standards.
- Build a statewide technology infrastructure that links all data elements with analytic and instructional tools to monitor and promote student achievement.
- Redesign the model for preparation, development, retention, and evaluation of teachers and principals.
- Fully implement the innovative **Breakthrough Center** approach for transforming low-performing schools and districts.

This reference to the **Breakthrough Center** approach is especially meaningful to **Dorchester County Public Schools**. Specifically, we have entered into a Breakthrough Center partnership for 2010-2011 with **MSDE and MSEA** that will have three main components:

- Developing and implementing a district-wide continuous improvement model.
- Defining instructional leadership and establishing district-wide professional development priorities.
- Creating a **Professional Learning Community (PLC)** to improve our interventions/remediations for children whose achievement is below proficient.

We have and will continue to keep our employees and the leadership of **Dorchester Educators** apprised of these processes and how they will impact our instructional practices.

Finally, there are two notes on RTTT which I would like to convey. First of all, only 22 of Maryland's 24 districts will partake of these funds; **Frederick County and Montgomery County** declined to endorse the state's application and are, therefore, ineligible to receive the money. Second, all 24 districts will have to determine how a portion of the teacher evaluation will reflect student performance. (Specifically, Maryland law will require that 50% of teacher evaluations be based on student performance data. Of that 50%, 30% will be determined by a state-wide formula; the other 20% is left up to individual districts – provided that a consensus can be reached. If there is no consensus, then this 20% will default to a state-wide formula.) Given the excellent relationship we enjoy with Dorchester Educators, we are optimistic about the upcoming collaborations on this matter sometime during the 2010-2011 school year. We will keep you informed on all of this in the months ahead.

Covey Update

Returning to our discussion of the *Seven Habits of Highly-Effective People*, there are two preliminary concepts that require our attention before considering any of the Habits. The first of these is the concept of fundamental *principles* of human behavior. Principles are universally recognized standards of human behavior that are valued across virtually all cultures, and which endure over time. Some examples are honesty, integrity, justice, compassion, kindness, clarity, and fairness. Covey intended his Seven Habits to be a vehicle for principled decision-making. The other concept is called *paradigm*. This refers to the lens or framework through which one views the world. For example, a person operating in a power-centered paradigm will try to acquire as much influence as possible; someone who is money-centered searches for wealth. Covey would advocate a **principle-centered** paradigm as the means to an **effective** life.

Finally, our **Teacher of the Year, Crystal Owens**, spoke eloquently on August 20 about finding her "voice." She mentioned that this was a reference to Stephen R. Covey's Eighth Habit, which is "find your voice and inspire others to find theirs." In this book entitled *The Eighth Habit: From Effectiveness to Greatness* (2004), Covey defines leadership as "communicating to others their (positive) worth and potential so clearly that they come to see it in themselves." Indeed, I cannot think of better words to describe what we believe about the art and science of teaching!