



Dorchester County  
Public Schools  
Every Child A Success

# SUPERINTENDENT'S STAFF BULLETIN

Henry V. Wagner, Jr., Superintendent

April 1, 2011

Volume 1, Issue 10

## ASSESSMENT UPDATES

It is my pleasure to begin this month's bulletin with some **excellent news** from the **elementary level!** Specifically, **79% of Dorchester County kindergarten students** are performing at **desired readiness levels** for school, according to this year's **Maryland Model for School Readiness** results. This represents a **13 point increase** from the previous year! The following is excerpted from a recent MSDE Bulletin:

*"The importance of strong early childhood development has never been more apparent," said Nancy S. Grasmick, State Superintendent of Schools. "By providing our youngest learners with a solid footing before they enter kindergarten, we can expect big leaps as they move through school."*

*The annual MSDE study reflects assessment information on kindergartners' readiness levels in social and personal areas, language and literacy, mathematical thinking, scientific thinking, social studies, the arts, physical development, and health. Trained kindergarten teachers review work samples and observations in making their determination of readiness.*

These improvements are a reflection of the dedicated efforts of our **Judy Center staff, DIS leadership, Pre-K educators** at each of our schools, and an emerging partnership with **private service providers**. More importantly, this level of readiness is a most encouraging development for the future success of our mission on behalf of all children. We **salute** everyone connected with our Pre-Kindergarten programs!

The next update is a reflection on this year's **Maryland School Assessment** program. **Mr. Hughes and I** visited each school involved in this year's testing program during both the **reading and mathematics** sessions. We were truly **impressed** with the level of determination and engagement that students exhibited at each school. Moreover, the test administration team effort – including all of the **examiners and proctors**, the **school test coordinators** at each location, the **administrators** at each school, the **DIS staff** who were able to assist, and our **Local Accountability Coordinator, Mr. Michael Johnson** - was as smooth as we have ever witnessed. **Thanks and congratulations** to each staff member involved in this monumental effort!

The final assessment update is an announcement regarding the upcoming **High School Assessment** program during the month of **May**. Because we will be relying on online assessment methods, we will **not need** to conduct the **staggered openings** that are listed in the **Calendar/Handbook** for **May 16-19** and explained on pages 36 and 37. This innovation has served us well for several years, but eliminating staggered openings will be an added **convenience** for parents and teachers and a **cost-saving** measure for DCPS.

### **MEETING WITH SENATOR BARBARA MIKULSKI**

On **Tuesday, March 22**, seven of the nine **Eastern Shore Superintendents** assembled at **Easton High School** at the invitation of **Sen. Mikulski** to discuss the pending reauthorization of **NCLB**. This was the first stop on her **“listening tour”** of the state in an effort to address the needs of children, parents, and educators as this latest version of the **Elementary and Secondary Education Act** (first passed in 1965) is crafted. The superintendents took full advantage of this singular opportunity to interact with a policymaker at the highest levels of our national government. Among the issues which we addressed were **funding, accountability, flexibility** for states, and the overlapping demands of **Race To The Top**. I took the opportunity to address the deficiencies and flaws of NCLB with respect to how children advance (developmentally rather than incrementally) and how people best perform (rewards vs. punishments). I also cited the importance of **Perkins** funding in relation to career and technology education, and noted the opening of our expanded **Dorchester Career and Technology Center** as a vital response to the perception of some of our students that they lack viable options. All-in-all, this was a very **encouraging** session with Sen. Mikulski. She was both attentive to our input and attuned to the issues! (For further details on this event, please consult the **March 23** issue of the *Star Democrat* and the **March 25** issue of the *Dorchester Banner*.)

### **INSTRUCTIONAL UPDATE**

As I have referenced in several previous bulletins, our **professional development** for instructional leaders this year has stressed the unique value of the post-conference as a **one-on-one professional development opportunity**. We have established the objective of **affirming sound professional practices** while **brainstorming instructional improvements** for each and every post conference. In an effort to reinforce at systemic levels the primary importance of the classroom in school improvement, our **March 23** professional development session was designed for our **assistant principals**. Assistant principals are important members of our instructional leadership cadre; they also provide a unique set of services to our school system. Therefore, it is a pleasure to salute them in conjunction with their special week (**March 28-April 1**).

## BUDGET UPDATE

During the month of **March**, our **Board of Education** and **executive staff** conducted an ongoing collaboration with the **Dorchester County Council** with regard to the issue of maintenance of effort (**MOE**). County governments in Maryland have the option annually to request a **waiver** of this statutory obligation to fund at established per-pupil levels as they craft a budget for the next fiscal year. As everyone is aware, fiscal conditions are severe in our nation, state, and county. Furthermore, there are those in every community who perceive **public education** not to have “suffered” to the degree that other departments of government have. When I have had the opportunity, I have hastened to point out that our school system has had to make painful adjustments over the last few years. Furthermore, public school systems have escalating demands each year, while other departments may not. Nevertheless, our County Council faced an important decision in this respect.

With all of this in mind, I am very **pleased** to share that the Council voted **not to seek a waiver of MOE for FY 2012**. This was due to our ability to return cost savings from our **capital** budget – principally from unspent funds designated for the new **North Dorchester Middle School** and the **Dorchester Career and Technology Center**. This reflects an exceptional level of **trust** and **cooperation** between DCPS and the County Council. It also is a credit to the **efficiency** of our **facilities department** and the **synergy** between **DAS** and **DIS** as crucial decisions were made over the last few years. While our revenue picture is still very challenging and uncertain, we can celebrate this development as a very positive step in the process.

## COVEY UPDATE

The **seventh habit** of highly effective people (now that both the *private* and *public victories* have been secured) is **Sharpen the Saw**. This is the habit of **personal renewal** that requires us to re-direct our energies towards recreation. In this “re-creation,” we refresh our spirit by seeking fresh perspectives on life and using assets that are typically not in focus. For example, a librarian might recreate by chopping wood, while a lumberjack would read a good book. The critical point is to attend to all of our dimensions – including the **spiritual, emotional, intellectual, physical, and relationship areas**.