



Dorchester County  
Public Schools  
Every Child A Success!

# SUPERINTENDENT'S STAFF BULLETIN

Henry V. Wagner, Jr., Superintendent

January 1, 2011

Volume 1, Issue 7

*Happy New Year!*

## INSTRUCTIONAL UPDATE

In previous months, I presented summaries of our system's new approaches to the **post-observation conference** and the **written narrative summary** of an observation lesson. Once again, the objective of these new approaches is to take full advantage of the **one-on-one professional development** opportunity that a formal lesson observation provides.

This month, I would like to speak to the importance of a well-crafted **objective** as the critical component of any successful lesson. There are numerous ways to craft a sound lesson objective, but I believe that the most effective ones have some key characteristics in common. These include, but are not limited to the following features:

- It contains a clear and precise statement of what students are expected to know and/or be able to do by the conclusion of the lesson.
- Only one objective statement is crafted for each lesson.
- It aligns with the target curriculum.
- It covers a single block of instructional time.
- It can be assessed in a formative manner.
- It is posted and discussed with the students.
- It is understood by the students.
- It serves as one of a series of "building blocks" in a sequential fashion to the rigorous understandings of a full unit of study.
- It addresses the rigorous *essential questions* that are associated with a unit of study.

I have seen excellent objectives in both statement and question form, although I personally prefer the former. It can also be a simple or compound sentence, depending on the grade level and content area. Clearly, crafting an effective lesson objective is both an art and a science. However, what matters most is that adequate thought and reflection be given to the objective before anything else about the lesson is decided. In this way, the teacher (or professional developer) is **beginning with the end in mind** on both a short and long-term basis!

## COVEY UPDATE

In previous updates, I summarized the first three habits (**Be Proactive, Begin With The End In Mind, and Put First Things First**), which constitute what Covey calls the *Private Victory*, because they are all about self-improvement of the individual. In this month's bulletin, I will begin to summarize the second set of habits, which are interactive in nature and constitute the *Public Victory*.

The fourth habit of highly effective people is **Think Win-Win**. This may be the Covey habit that is most frequently misunderstood, because it may be interpreted as promoting a compromise of principles or a denial of healthy competition. In fact, this habit calls for establishing a **climate of cooperation** by seeking mutual benefit and keeping the **vision** in sight. It also references what Covey calls the *Abundance Mentality*, which is the paradigm that validation of another does not diminish one's own worth. Finally, this habit has an important corollary component when a "win-win" is not possible – specifically, **Think Win-Win or No Deal**.

## RACE-TO-THE-TOP UPDATE

At a recent Superintendents' meeting, a majority of district superintendents (myself included) voted to retain Maryland's **traditional pathway for mathematics**. This means that high school mathematics courses will continue to be called *Algebra I, Algebra II, Geometry, Calculus*, and so forth. The other option was the new course designations of *Mathematics I, II, and III*, which some of the other states are adopting as a result of the Common Core movement. Also, the **Educator Instructional Improvement Academies** are still being planned for the summer of 2011. Teams consisting of the principal, a STEM teacher, a mathematics teacher, and an English teacher from each school in the state will attend one of these regionally-sponsored academies. Many more details on this initiative will be forthcoming throughout the spring. Finally, the **Council for Educator Effectiveness**, which has the task of designing evaluation systems for teachers and principals that are based on student performance (see **September Staff Bulletin**), has requested a six month extension of their deadline (to June, 2011) from the Governor. We will continue to keep you informed of RTTT developments as they are announced throughout 2011.

## TASK FORCES IN DCPS

Over the last three-and-a-half years, DCPS has established a variety of **task forces** to address the special issues that affect various educational levels and/or stakeholder groups. These task forces (which have consisted of **teachers, administrators, parents, community representatives, and district leaders**) have been vitally important sources of collaboration, consensus building, and problem solving. Indeed, their presence has enabled us to become more systemically aware, and evolve from disparate and isolated approaches to consistent, county-wide practices. The following chart summarizes the current status of these groups:

<b>Task Force</b>	<b>Chairperson</b>	<b>Mission</b>
Minority Achievement Task Force	Dr. Gwen Handy	To enlist support for our mission (to implement immediate and evident measures to address achievement for ALL, achievement gaps, and minority achievement, resulting in ALL students completing their program of study) that the community can provide.
High School Task Force	Mr. Michael Johnson	To provide programs of study that enable students to graduate with the credentials necessary to continue their personal growth and development in college, or in a competitive fashion in the workforce.
Middle School Task Force	Mrs. Patricia Vickers	To offer appropriate experiences to the full range of middle school students, and to align the DCPS middle school program with elementary and high school programs.
Breakthrough Professional Learning Community (PLC)	Mr. Henry Wagner and Dr. Robert Glascock	To design and implement a PreK-12 tiered intervention system in reading and mathematics.
Alternative Learning Task Force	Mr. James Bell	To create an environment where every child will learn and succeed by providing access to quality educational programs that challenge and engage all students.
Elementary School Task Force	Shared	To begin to focus on specific achievement and behavioral issues in Dorchester County Elementary Schools through dialogue based on available resources, including best practice research and county policies and procedures.

The **Elementary School Task Force** is the newest of the list, and is being led by a focused group of **Elementary Principals, Mr. Hughes**, and the rest of the **Executive Team**.