



Dorchester County
Public Schools
Every Child A Success

SUPERINTENDENT'S STAFF BULLETIN

Henry V. Wagner, Jr., Superintendent

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Budget Update

You may have heard in the news media that several counties in the State of Maryland are **reducing financial support** to their school systems. Unfortunately, this now applies to **our school system** as well. Because of the economic conditions and funding reductions from the State, **the appropriation from our County Council** for the coming year will be **\$907,657 less** than the current year. This represents a funding level of **\$750,000 below Maintenance of Effort (MOE)**. Additionally, we will experience a **reduction** from the **State of Maryland of \$125,233**. The **Board of Education** has not finalized our budget for next year, so I cannot provide specifics as to the impact of these funding reductions. There are several **one-time options** to consider that would **lessen the adverse impact** upon our school system. During the month of **June**, the **Board of Education** will be finalizing the budget and I will promptly **share the outcome** of the budget process with you.

Additionally, I would still characterize our **relationship** with the **Dorchester County Council** as **productive and positive**. They made the decision to fund below MOE with **great reluctance** and after conferring with both the Board of Education and superintendent's staff regarding possible dollar amounts. **Our position was that we could not advocate for or endorse any funding level below MOE, given our fiduciary obligations to the school system**. During one of the **public hearings** conducted by the Council, **I addressed a number of incorrect assertions** that some in the general public had made. For example, I made the case that DCPS has experienced **cuts**, has **reduced staff**, and has an **obligation** to produce college and career-ready graduates – regardless of whether their career paths keep them here or lead them somewhere else. **Danielle Cox, President of Dorchester Educators**, also spoke eloquently on behalf of our school system.

Staffing Update and Transfer Meeting

Due to the extended budget discussions this year, we have not yet been able to finalize the **school organizations** (number of **full-time employees (FTE)** available for each school, **teaching assignments**, etc.). This, in turn, has impacted the timing of the annual **transfer meeting**. This year's meeting will take place on

Friday, June 10, at the **Central Office**. The **objective** of the transfer meeting is to **align** the needs of **students** and **schools** with the credentials, strengths, and specific requests of **staff** whenever possible. The meeting is facilitated by the **Office of Human Resources**; the participants are **principals, supervisors, and superintendent's staff**. The process is essentially an **open discussion** regarding possible placements of staff who have requested a transfer – either on the annual **intent form** or by means of a **subsequent written request**. Some placement decisions are made ahead of or independent of this event as a function of the **Negotiated Agreement, federal and state regulations**, and the **appraisal process**. Please be assured that we will **consider all** official requests and **notify** staff as soon as possible if there is any change in your current assignment. Finally, I plan to recommend **principal appointments** for **South Dorchester School** and **Hurlock Elementary School** to the **Board of Education** before the end of the school year.

Instructional Roundup

This 2010-2011 school year will be remembered for several **instructional developments** that will positively impact **student achievement**. Beginning with last summer's **mathematics enrichment/preview** program in **summer school**, we were pleased to note a marked upturn in students' successful participation in **higher-level mathematics** courses. Also, **Mr. Hughes** collaborated with **Division of Instructional Services** staff to effect a **reorganization** of the division; this enabled us to create a dedicated **supervisory position** from existing staffing for the **early childhood/elementary program** to which **Mrs. Teat** has been appointed beginning on **July 1**. Additionally, the various **task forces** (see **May Bulletin – Instructional Update**) continued their collaborative efforts during the 2010-2011 school year. Also, DCPS successfully completed the required **scope of work** processes for our portion of **Maryland's Race-To-The-Top (RTTT)** grant allowance.

However, the most significant developments were in the area of **professional development** and, especially, with respect to how we conduct the **instructional conversation** in our district. The **formal observation** process has been transformed into a bona fide **one-on-one professional development** experience for our teachers. This reform, accomplished in partnership with the **MSDE Breakthrough Center**, is manifested in changes in both the sequence and manner in which we observe, conference, and certify the formal classroom appraisal experience in writing. As a result, DCPS is poised to have very effective collaborations with Dorchester Educators on the **data driven evaluations** that the RTTT program requires.

Improved Attendance Data for 2010-2011

The overall and school-specific student attendance data indicate **marked improvements for 2010-2011** in virtually every category. In my view, this is more than just a function of fewer cold and flu outbreaks. Rather, it is a reflection of the **dedicated efforts** on the part of so many staff members – including **teachers**,

administrators, nurses and wellness partners, student services, support personnel, and transportation, food service, and facilities staff. The critical first step in improving student achievement is to have our students show up, so **congratulations** to everyone for this successful **team effort!**

Civil War Essay Contest

Board of Education member **Mr. Phil Bramble** is a “**Civil War Buff**” and has very graciously come forward to sponsor an **essay contest** for **fourth grade** students in DCPS. The theme is “**Maryland’s Role in the Civil War**” and essays should address regional differences in the Civil War era and why loyalties were divided in our state. (As a social studies teacher, I can tell you that this is directly relevant to some of the social issues with which we are still dealing today.) Mr. Bramble is offering a **\$100 savings bond** to the **first place essay** from the entire school system and a **\$50 savings bond** for the **second place essay**. During the month of May, fourth grade teachers provided this assignment and **one outstanding essay** from each school was determined. **Mr. Hughes and Dr. Handy** have determined a process for selecting the two countywide winners and will announce them prior to the **June Board Meeting**. We thank Mr. Bramble for his sponsorship of this opportunity for our students.

Dorchester’s Future Is Now!

On **June 21**, a landmark event will take place that will positively affect our school system’s relationship with the Dorchester community for years to come. Entitled ***Dorchester’s Future is Now***, this event will bring **over 80 business leaders**, the **Board of Education**, my **Advisory Council**, and **County Council** members together with DCPS in a **face-to-face format**. This will occur in conjunction with the completion of our new **Dorchester Career and Technology Center** and will be held **at the school**, itself. The intention is to spur **dialogue** and give businesses a vested interest and clearer **connection** to our school system. (We realize that it is also vital that the insights of these dialogues with the business community reach the staff of DCPS.) **The Dorchester Chamber of Commerce, Dorchester Office of Economic Development, and Business Partnership and Adopt-A-School** subcommittee of my **Superintendent’s Advisory Council** will officially sponsor this collaboration, which will also include **lunch** and a **tour** of the new DCTC. **Mr. Peter Taillie** of **Mid-Shore Mediation** will facilitate the **discussion** portion of the agenda on a pro-bono basis to help us promote our business partnerships. We will provide you with a summary of this event, as well as the overall progress we are making with our business community partnerships!

Kickoff Event for 2011-2012

During the summer and after negotiations are completed, we will finalize the date of the **2011-2012 kickoff event**. Our tentative plan is to conduct the **benefits fair** and have high school **band members** perform

at the new DCTC as all county staff **tour the new facility** in shifts (three, at most), replacing a formal assembly/program. The **rationale** is that this is the only time in the next several decades that we will be opening a new career center and our only chance for **all school system employees** to see it as a brand new facility. In this way, staff will be able to picture and relate to the facility, and establish it as one **end-in-mind** for the students they reach throughout their prek-12 experience.

Covey Update

This year's series of **Covey insights** has been offered in the hope that staff would consider embracing this proven vehicle for **principled leadership and decision-making**. Now more than ever, school systems and the business and government sectors are recognizing the need for a renewal of **ethical behavior**. Covey intended that his seven habits would make the ethical pathway easier to identify and follow. I hope that you found these updates thought-provoking, and will continue to reflect on his ideas when I offer them in future bulletins.

End of School Year Thank You

The fact that this is Issue 12 of Volume 1 of these bulletins indicates that, amazingly, the school year is about to end! In all the ways that matter most, this was as the song says **“a very good year!”** Please accept my sincere **thanks** for making it so, and may the summer be a time of **satisfaction** and **renewal** for each of you.