

## Highlights from *Driving to the Next Dimension: Taking Leadership to a New Level*

Remarks by

Dr. Joe A. Hairston, Superintendent, Baltimore County Public Schools at the  
2005-2006 Administrative and Supervisory Meeting

August 19, 2005 at Loch Raven High School

### **Preparing for the 2005-2006 school year**

- The 2005-2006 Administrative and Supervisory Meeting is actually the culmination of a great deal of work we have done, this spring and summer, to prepare ourselves for the 2005-2006 school year. This work includes:
  - our high school summit (which involved 550 educators and community leaders), our Principals' Academy (where I unveiled our priorities for the upcoming school year)
  - New Teacher Induction
  - summer curriculum workshops
  - Elementary Summer Science Institute
  - Fine Arts Academy
  - Curriculum and Instruction and Business Services Retreat
  - the retreat for the Executive Staff

### **Education: A shared responsibility**

- To be successful, the responsibility for quality education must be shared, and in Baltimore County, we are fortunate that our stakeholders embrace and help fulfill this responsibility. County Executive Jim Smith, the Baltimore County Council, and the Maryland State legislature modeled that again this year. Baltimore County approved a \$1.3 billion budget for our school system. This financial support will enable us to strengthen employee compensation packages, especially for our teachers. In addition, the state approved \$25 million for capital construction projects.
- For the past five years, Baltimore County Public Schools has achieved what all school systems strive for - steadily rising academic performance. While our administration has established a strong basis for this positive growth, major credit belongs to our

17,000 Baltimore County Public Schools employees, 108,000 students and their parents and families, and countless supporters and friends.

### ***Blueprint for Progress: our foundation for success***

- Over the past five years everything that we have achieved in Baltimore County has risen from our basic platform our *Blueprint for Progress*. Because we are following the *Blueprint*:
  - We are increasing academic rigor across the board.
  - Our students are achieving more because we are expecting more from them, preparing them better, and giving them more opportunities to learn and grow.

### **Proof of our progress**

- Advanced Placement participation has risen from 1.7% in 1989-1990 to more than 9% in 2003-2004, exceeding our goal of 7%.
  - Advanced Placement pass rates, now at 71.2% have remained above the global rate and above our system goals.
  - We exceed the state pass rate of 66.8% and the global pass rate of 62%.
  - Our SAT participation (now at 52%) has grown for three straight years and continues to exceed a growing national participation rate, now at 48%.
  - At 1027, our combined SAT scores have remained strong, exceeding the national average, and MSA scores have consistently risen, surpassing performance standards.
  - Parent involvement and parent satisfaction are rising, with increases in parents participating in student events and teacher conferences. And with 94% of elementary school parents and 92% of middle school parents expressing overall satisfaction with their schools.
- We also have been recognized in countless ways – locally, nationally, and even internationally – for our leadership and accomplishments.
    - Some of our students and I participated as presenters at the 2004 National High School Summit in Washington, D.C.
    - This spring, more than 550 educators and community leaders, including some from Great Britain, joined us for the state’s first local summit on

high schools. *District Administration* magazine featured our summit in their July issue.

- We also received strong recognition for our leadership in the use of technology to enhance administration and classroom teaching. We won three major awards: one statewide, one national, and one international.
- Seven of our high schools were named among the nation's top 4% by *Newsweek* magazine, including Pikesville High School, which ranked in the top 100.
- Our students dominated national arts competitions, and the Carver Center was named by The College Board as the best studio art program in the world among high schools its size.

### **Our challenge: Sustaining gains, accelerating progress**

- The real challenge now is sustainability and building capacity – because where we are today is not the final destination...Technologically, politically, socially, economically – the world is changing as fast if not faster than ever. It keeps moving ahead, and we must, too.
- School systems are experiencing a level of scrutiny that is more intense than at any other time in my 37-year career...State and national government are asking us to do something they have never really asked us to do before. They are holding us accountable by insisting that we prove our progress with hard data for every child...[E]nsuring that every child is well educated is exactly what public education should and must do. This is a chance for us to stand on the right side of history.

### **Where our students need to go – the next dimension**

- We need to go where our students need us to go – to the next dimension...The next dimension is about preparing our students to lead and thrive in the global and technical future. It has everything to do with understanding the relationship between public education and economic development.
  - The pace of technology is accelerating...
  - It takes time to produce the math and science innovators we will need to remain competitive...
  - Our students will be competing against students from around the world, including students in countries with high skill levels and low wages...

- To succeed in the next dimension, our students will need to be high-level thinkers with learning skills and with character. They will need to have stronger critical thinking, math, and science skills than ever before. They will need to excel at technical reading and writing, more functional uses of language.
- To prepare our students to lead in this new world, we must understand it. That is why we have been investing so much in technology and in professional development. That is why we invested in the high school summit. And that is why we have become more global in our approach to education and more focused on establishing relationships with other countries. This summer Mathematics Director Pat Baltzley, Dulaney High Principal Lyle Patzkowsky, and Parkville High Principal Kevin Harahan went to China to look at how mathematics is taught there. They met with the Prime Minister of Beijing and China's Vice Minister for Education. For the third year we also had Board and staff members meet with education leaders from the United Kingdom at Oxford University.

### **A message for our 8,000 teachers**

- At this point in my comments, in addition to addressing you [administrators and supervisors in the audience], I am also speaking to our 8,000 teachers. They will watch this address on video as the school year begins. I want them to hear and know what our priorities are for the upcoming school year and what our challenges are.

### **Our students: the millennial generation**

- One of the things we have done over the past year is bring Neil Howe, an expert on generations, to Baltimore County to help all of us better understand the students we serve. The students in our schools today are part of the new millennial generation, and according to research and analysis, they are destined for greatness, destined to rebuild and reshape the basic institutions of this nation.
- This is a generation of children who want to please, who want to achieve, and to be connected... They are optimistic about the future, confident, and fairly conventional....They see the world and know what they need to succeed. And they know when their schools are not keeping up.

### **The importance of celebrating our youth**

- You have all been urged to develop ways to support millennial students. I would add to this that we need to celebrate our youth. Everything about our interactions with them is important – the way we smile, our conversations *with* them, and our conversations *about* them.
- I have told the story so many times now about my third grade teacher, Mrs. Woodard, and how her words still ring in my ear. I was struggling over writing an essay, and

she leaned over and whispered, “You can do this.” Her confidence in me and the sensitive way that she reached out to me made a lasting and permanent impression.

- The power of education truly lies in these interactions. What happens from now on with our school system depends on 17,000 problem solvers... contributing their best... to support the education of our students.

### **Leading our classrooms, leading our schools**

- Baltimore County Public Schools will get to the next dimension: when every principal steps up to fulfill his or her promise as a schoolhouse leader, when every principal supports every teacher in being a true classroom leader, and when every manager empowers his or her staff members to lead. We need full ownership and full participation by all.
- It is our principals and our teachers who can improve student achievement... The function for the rest of us is to provide support for them.
- Education researchers David Tyack and Larry Cuban studied 100 years of school reform for their book *Tinkering Toward Utopia*. And their conclusions reflect what I see here, meaningful improvements in public education are less about administration and more about effective teachers making connections to students. “Reform” works best, they argue, when it either involves teachers as key decision-makers or when it provides teachers with new tools or approaches that work in the classroom. In other words, progress in the schools is dependent on teachers being empowered as classroom leaders.

### **Ingredients for leadership success**

- There are certain key ingredients for leadership success. One of them is what I call quiet confidence. It is an understanding that if you get things done, if you achieve the results you promise, people will know you are there. For me quiet confidence is about having balance – recognizing both successes and challenges for what they are, and moving on. And for me, quiet confidence is about operating with minimal anxiety and a maximum sense of purpose.
- Aside from that, here are what I think of as the key ingredients for leadership success:
  - A constant mode of reflection
  - Using SMART goals - **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**ttainable, **R**esults-oriented and **T**ime-bound
  - Making sure behaviors match goals
  - Using data to make assessments and critical decisions **AND**

- Having a spirit of possibility... You have to believe it can be done... to even try. You have to be a true competitor - never give up.
- This leadership is so important because we still have work ahead of us... Five years of progress is not enough for me. It is definitely not enough for our students. I expect that it is not enough for you either.

### **The upcoming school year: Student achievement**

- This year's ninth graders are the first group of students that must not only take the high school assessment, but must pass it to graduate.
- We can...move all students forward by strengthening math instruction and by enhancing instruction at critical moments for each child.
- We now collect and have immediate access to more data on student performance than ever before. We can no longer use data to assess students after all content has been taught. We must use it to adjust instruction while it is being delivered.
- Whether students are part of our gifted and talented program, or special education program, whether students have come to us from state agencies or from other countries, all of them deserve our best. We need to meet them where they are, making whatever adjustments, incorporating whatever academic interventions, are needed.
- During this coming school year, something special will happen. Some of our AVID students will be entering Advanced Placement courses for the first time. These are students who never expected to go to college. But through the AVID program, with tutoring, mentoring, and other support, they have raised their sights and expanded their dreams. Their achievement reflects what is happening throughout our school system, more students reaching higher.

### **The upcoming school year: Fiscal and resource management**

- We are the largest business in Baltimore County. We manage a budget of over \$1.3 billion. We are now recognized at the local, state, and national levels for our ability to effectively run the business of schools. In the coming year, we will move our laser-beam focus on resource management to the maintenance of our school buildings.

### **The upcoming school year: Human resources**

- As of this morning, we will open school with over \_\_\_\_\_% of our teaching positions filled... And we have five days to go. Seven... counting tomorrow and Sunday – and, if needed, we will work this weekend to get teachers in every classroom.

## **The capacity and wisdom to make course corrections**

- We are following a solid plan, but we still need the capacity and the wisdom to make adjustments en route. Think about a rocket. If it gets off course or if its destination changes, ground control does not bring it back to earth. The crew on the ship or at the command center makes course corrections as needed. Similarly the secret to good instruction – and good leadership – is to constantly monitor and adjust, to be aware, and to be flexible.

## **To the next dimension – beyond limits**

- We are preparing our students for a future that we cannot imagine, that **they** cannot imagine. And we are finally, finally, at a place where schools are no longer designed to sort children and predetermine how far they can or will go. There are no more limits. There is no limit to what our students can do, what we can do, or how far we can drive this system forward.