

## **Annual Address**

Administrative & Supervisory Meeting 2005  
Baltimore County Public Schools

# ***“Driving to the Next Dimension: Taking Leadership to a New Level”***

***Dr. Joe A. Hairston, Superintendent***  
Loch Raven High School – Friday, August 19, 2005

Good morning, and welcome to the 2005 - 2006 Administrative and Supervisory Meeting.

I know that many consider this the kickoff to the school year, but it is actually the culmination of a great deal of work we have done, this spring and summer, to prepare ourselves for 2005-2006. 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), the New Teacher Induction, the summer curriculum workshops, the Elementary Summer Science Institute, the Fine Arts Academy, the Curriculum and Instruction and Business Services Retreat, and the retreat for my executive staff. Probably most of you in this room were involved in at least one of these activities.

I thank all of you for your contributions. This is the 37th time that I have kicked off a new school year, 30 of those as an administrator. Each year is just as exciting as though it was the first.

This morning, I want to welcome those new to Baltimore County Public Schools. This year we are welcoming 80 new administrators and supervisors. We look forward to benefiting from your experience and ideas.

Education belongs to all of us. In six words, that sums up the theme of my remarks this morning. I want to talk about taking ownership and expanding leadership; not just knowing that education is our shared responsibility, but assuming and fulfilling that responsibility. This is the key to our continued progress.

Our school system is already good. The work ahead is to drive our good school system to the next dimension. We can – and we will – do this by taking leadership to a new level.

Several years ago, in 1999, I developed the variables diagram to illustrate that education truly does belong to all of us.

School success is impacted by many factors, and school success depends on the combined efforts of visionary leadership, strong principals, effective teachers, hardworking students, active parents, and supportive communities and governing boards.

We are extremely fortunate in Baltimore County to have all these ingredients for continued progress.

I want to take a moment to acknowledge the elected officials, community leaders, and the members of the Baltimore County Board of Education whose unwavering support helps us fulfill our mission every day. 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, especially for our teachers. In addition, the state approved \$25 million for capital construction projects.

Thank you to the county and state officials and to all our stakeholders.

I frequently mention that a community that ceases to support its children becomes a decaying community. I am proud to say that Baltimore County is a community that does support its youth, and this is a major reason for the county's continued success.

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, their parents and families, and countless supporters and friends.

This success was launched from a solid foundation. During 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.

Here is some of the proof of our progress:

- Advanced Placement participation has risen from 1.7 percent in 1989-1990 to more than 9 percent in 2003-2004, exceeding our goal of 7 percent.
- Advanced Placement pass rates, now at 71.2 percent, have remained above the global rate and above our system goals. We exceed the state pass rate of 66.8 percent and the global pass rate of 62 percent.

- Our SAT participation (now at 52 percent) has grown for three straight years and continues to exceed a growing national participation rate, now at 48 percent.
- 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 percent of elementary school parents and 92 percent 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 percent 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.

I could go on and on. I would be **happy** to go on and on, but the point is not each particular award or honor. What is significant is that we are building an overall culture of higher expectations and higher results.

We did not get here by accident or by employing a quick fix. There was no big bang moment of change.

We have been winning a lot of championships, by being methodical and fundamentally sound, by creating and following a solid plan – our *Blueprint*.

The real challenge now is to sustain this growth and build capacity – because where we are today is not the final destination. We cannot simply rest on our laurels – because the world is not at rest. Time is unforgiving. Technologically, politically, socially, economically – the world is changing as fast if not faster than ever. It keeps moving ahead, and we must, too.

Every day, I think about the confidence we earned from our community, confidence we earned because of what we have achieved and because of our potential to do even more. We cannot betray or lose that confidence.

School systems are experiencing a level of scrutiny that is more intense than at any other time in my 37-year career. This is truly something new. 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.

I submit to you that ensuring 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.

So the question now is where do we go from here?

And the answer is simple. We need to go where our students need us to go – to the next dimension.

This has nothing to do with *Star Trek* or *Star Wars* or *The Twilight Zone*. 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.

I'd like to share with you some of my thoughts along with some facts that were recently presented to the United States House of Representatives. These facts come from a speech given on May 19 by Norman Augustine, retired chairman and CEO of Lockheed Martin Corporation and a recipient of the National Medal of Technology.

- The pace of technology is accelerating. Research and development are growing in importance. For example, Intel has said that nearly 90 percent of the products it sells today did not exist a year ago.
- It takes time to produce the math and science innovators we will need to remain competitive. Based on current trends, we must begin with 3,500 ninth-graders in 2005 to produce 300 freshman qualified to pursue a degree in mathematics. Of these, about 10 will actually receive a bachelor's degree in the field. Finally, one Ph.D. in mathematics will emerge in about 2019.
- Our students will be competing against students from around the world, including students in countries with high skill levels and low wages. Today, a company can

hire 11 well-educated engineers in India for the price of one in America. The exodus of jobs that began with assembly workers and then spread to software designers is now moving to the most advanced research laboratories.

- On international examinations of high school seniors, Americans place 15<sup>th</sup> out of 16 nations in advanced math. They place 16<sup>th</sup> out of 16 in science.
- We have built what is generally recognized as the world's finest higher education system, but the number of U.S. graduates with bachelor's degrees in the physical sciences, mathematics, and engineering has been declining for two decades. And over half the PhDs our universities award in engineering are granted to foreign citizens.

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.

We are not on this journey for ourselves. We are on this journey for our passengers, our students.

At this point in my comments, in addition to addressing you, 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.

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. (I think you will see a lot of our students

in this description.)

This is a generation of children who want to please, who want to achieve, and to be connected. Despite the hysteria sometimes from the media, youth violent crime is down. These are young people who are less likely to take risks like drinking, smoking, or teen pregnancy. These are young people who prefer to work in teams on community service and school projects.

We find that they are optimistic about the future, confident, and fairly conventional. They are likely to be close to their parents and to agree with parental values. They feel pressured to achieve, but they value security. They see the world and know what they need to succeed. And they know when their schools are not keeping up.

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.

We must embrace every child in Baltimore County Public Schools as our child. It is the right thing to do, and sometimes, maybe, it is not an easy thing to do. Children are not perfect. But neither are we and neither is the world. But you cannot just choose to accept the perfect parts; when you accept an individual, you have to accept all of him or her.

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.

All of you – all of us – have the tremendous opportunity and responsibility to make similar lasting impressions.

There is a popular motivational parable about footprints in the sand, about walking on the sand alone and then looking back and sometimes seeing two sets of footprints. Whatever your beliefs, this is powerful imagery that resonates with all of us in education. There are times when we are walking beside our students and times when we are walking behind them or in front of them. There are times when our children are frustrated and ready to give up, and it is up to us, as educators, to pick up their spirits, to inspire and carry them forward.

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.

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.

Our teachers and staff members need to know that they aren't in their classrooms or offices or school buses or cafeterias by themselves. We are there to provide support and to nurture their growth.

We will get to the next dimension when all the rest of us fully understand that it is our principals and our teachers who can improve student achievement and that the function for the rest of us is to provide support for them.

It is up to each principal to set the academic tone of his or her school, to ensure that there is academic rigor in his or her school.

What you expect of students and staff, how you articulate that, the decisions you make, the way you hire, how you model leadership, the way you create your school schedule – all of these things convey that academic tone!

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.

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
- 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.

On the screen behind me are our priorities for the upcoming school year. Rather than read them to you, I would like to make some specific comments about what we must do to address these priorities.

[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. There are more than 9,700 students in the BCPS class of 2010. Some may be on track. Some may not be. But all must do better.

We can do this, and 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 only to assess students after all content has been taught. We must use it to adjust instruction while it is being delivered.

In addition, I want us to remember that all means all. 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 that 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.

[Fiscal Management 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.

[Human Resources]

As of this morning, we will open school with over 99.4 percent 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.

We will continue to implement the comprehensive and aggressive plan we began last fall to recruit and retain highly qualified staff. We will do so at the system level, but I expect every principal in this room to engage as the leader I know he or she can be in order to put the people in the right positions and make effective decisions in the school house.

[Communications and Marketing]

We have every reason to share our good news, and we intend to do more of it. Put very simply, we will actively promote public engagement, and our schools are expected to welcome community participation.

I would like to see more families than ever participate in back to school nights and in conferences with teachers. All of us, every Baltimore County Public Schools employee has the opportunity to contribute to this sharing of good news and inviting the community in to our schools.

Every one of us can be an effective ambassador for Baltimore County Public Schools.

[Information Technology]

With all of the educational technology awards and honors we have received you would think that we are at the top of our game. But the world will continue to change and continued improvement is expected of us.

[Safe Schools]

Before students can learn, they must be in environments where the focus is on learning, not behavior management, not other safety concerns.

We will continue our efforts to reduce behavioral and other safety issues.

[Leadership]

Leadership is the core of my message here today, and our priorities emphasize why this leadership is so important.

We have, and 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.

Likewise the secret to good instruction – and good leadership – is to constantly monitor and adjust, to be aware and to be flexible.

The energy, the answers, are within all of us. We are building a legacy here, building it on the foundation of previous legacies.

This is not the year, nor the time, to make excuses or complain or to be complacent. This is a critical time for all of us to adapt, adjust, move forward, push forward, and drive forward to the next level of achievement.

Remember when we used to say, “The sky is the limit,” when we dreamed as a nation of landing on the moon. Well, we have been to the moon many times now, and we know that the sky is not the limit. There is no more limit!

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.

We have our road map. We have our passengers. Our vehicle is ready.

Now is the time to accelerate! It is time to drive to the next dimension.

We are all in this together. Let's have a great year!

Thank you.