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## CHESTERFIELD COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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Marcus J. Newsome, Ed.D., Superintendent

### News Release

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#### Curriculum management audit recommendations to help school system move from good to great

Recommendations from a curriculum management audit commissioned by Chesterfield County Public Schools will be presented to the School Board and superintendent tonight.

To continue to move toward the School Board's vision of every school as a "thriving, dynamic and inspiring educational environment that produces self-directed learners," Chesterfield County Public Schools brought in education experts from Phi Delta Kappa International for a curriculum management audit. Bringing in experts to look with fresh eyes to see where improvements are needed, the audit report says, "expresses ... commitment to ongoing improvement."

"Most school systems are reluctant to conduct a curriculum audit. In Chesterfield County Public Schools, we are neither reluctant nor will we rest on our accomplishments," said Superintendent Marcus Newsome.

The auditors were in Chesterfield Sept. 24-28 to interview school employees and other community members, visit classrooms and review documents in order to measure the Chesterfield school system against international standards for curriculum and for areas that support curriculum, such as budget and personnel services.

On the positive side, auditors found that Chesterfield County Public Schools is "student-centered and forward-looking. ... Most classrooms visited by auditors were cheerful, pleasant settings focused on learning. Auditors sensed a professional pride among both division and school staffs." Auditors praised School Board planning efforts and alignment

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## Curriculum management audit recommendations (continued)

of school improvement plans with the division's Design for Excellence strategic plan.

The audit team made several recommendations for improvement, which are being incorporated into the Design for Excellence strategic plan, a plan that the audit says provides "a clear focus for decisions."

"Are there areas in this audit where we can pat ourselves on the back? Yes. Are there areas identified in this audit where we can do better? Always," Dr. Newsome said, noting that school officials have already begun to work on these recommendations:

- The audit found that policies and procedures need to be consistent and formalized. The school system is moving to document policies and processes that are in place for curriculum development, staff development and student assessment.
- Gaps exist in achievement, opportunity, discipline and staffing. The school system's strategic plan, adopted last month, includes many actions to eliminate these gaps.
- The auditors found that the evaluation process does not promote employee development and growth. The school system is implementing a personalized professional growth plan system for administrators and teachers.
- Population growth in Chesterfield County has outpaced school construction. Five schools are currently under construction, and the new public facilities plan calls for building 13 additional schools.
- The audit calls for an alternative budget development process to align with the strategic plan. The budget being developed for 2008-09 is aligned with the strategic plan.

Some audit recommendations were unexpected, and school officials are taking immediate action:

- Auditors found school computers unused too much of the time and observed a lack of variety in instructional methods. School officials will encourage principals and teachers to increase student use of computers and to employ a variety of instructional strategies on a daily basis.
- Curriculum documents for elementary classes were rated more favorably than those for secondary classes. Officials will revise the documents to provide more support for middle and high school teachers.

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## Curriculum management audit recommendations (continued)

Some audit recommendations will be considered:

- The audit recommends a strengthened central administration. Chesterfield County Public Schools seeks administrative consistency with operational flexibility to allow shared decision-making between central administrators and school principals.
- The audit states that tutoring programs are inconsistently designed and implemented. Most tutoring programs are tailor-made at each school, often in partnership with community groups.

“The future for Chesterfield County Public Schools is bright,” Dr. Newsome said. “We have a fully engaged School Board and a great team of students, parents, teachers, administrators and community leaders. Our team is in place and our plan is in place. ... Working together, we will build on our successes. Working together, we will take Chesterfield County Public Schools from good to great!”

In the words of the audit team, “With the professional backgrounds, experience and commitment of so many division and school leaders and staff members ... Chesterfield County Public Schools will move to higher levels of excellence.”

### By the numbers

- The complete audit process took eight months.
- Thirteen auditors visited Chesterfield County Sept. 24-28.
- The curriculum management audit fee was \$105,975.
- Auditors interviewed 248 people in Chesterfield County, including School Board members, superintendent, principals, teachers, staff members, students, parents and community members.
- Auditors reviewed thousands of pages of documents.
- Chesterfield County Public Schools has 58,431 students and is one of the 100 largest school systems in the country and the fourth-largest school system in Virginia.

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