



CHESTERFIELD COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Marcus J. Newsome, Ed.D., Superintendent

January 22, 2008

An open letter to Chesterfield County Public Schools and the community:

Chesterfield County Public Schools is an award-winning school division educating more than 58,000 children to ensure they acquire the knowledge, skills and values that they need for successful futures. As a leader in education, Chesterfield County Public Schools is committed to continuous improvement. We work daily to create a safe, nurturing and dynamic learning environment that produces self-directed learners prepared to succeed in the 21st century.

The foundation for the success of Chesterfield County Public Schools is a strong partnership among students, parents, School Board, employees and the community. 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.

I believe one of the responsibilities of a strong school system is working with the community, and being held accountable for the tax dollars we are entrusted to spend for educating our children. To that end, recommending a curriculum audit was one of the first decisions I made when I became Superintendent in Chesterfield.

Often, audits are promptly placed in a study group. Over time the audit is evaluated and re-evaluated. Eventually, some of the recommendations bubble back to the top only to be placed in a timeline. Then, a report is produced detailing progress or lack thereof. And then, the timeline is reassessed and adjusted. The cycle goes on and on.

For me, such a course of action is a course of inaction. Many of the recommendations in this audit can be addressed immediately. In fact, many of the items already are being implemented through our newly adopted *Design for Excellence* six-year strategic plan. We are going to be bold. We are taking additional action now.

This audit supports our vision and our six-year strategic plan. 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.

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

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Today, I am announcing, based on the recommendations of the audit, three important action items.

- First, the audit recommended that our school system policies need to be consistent and formalized. This is an important recommendation and we must immediately document these policies and processes. This is vital for curriculum development, staff development and student assessment.
- Second, the audit discussed that gaps exist in achievement, opportunity, discipline and staffing. It is critically important that every student, teacher and administrator have every opportunity to succeed. Therefore, we must eliminate these gaps. This is a key priority and the strategic plan adopted last month includes many of the actions that we will take to eliminate these gaps.
- Third, the documents showed that our expectations for creating self-directed learners are not being fully realized in the classroom. Auditors found school computers unused too often and also observed a lack of variety in instructional methods. School leaders will work to ensure that these vital components of 21st century learning styles are integrated into classrooms every day.

In addition to taking immediate action on these three items, I have directed the leadership team of Chesterfield County Public Schools to integrate recommendations from the curriculum audit into our *Design for Excellence*, our blueprint for the future.

The determination and commitment of our team are in place. Our plan is dynamic. The future for Chesterfield County Public Schools is bright. We have a fully engaged School Board and a great team of students, parents, teachers, administrators and community leaders.

The future is tomorrow, but the time to act is today. Working together, we will build on our successes. Working together, we will take Chesterfield County Public Schools from good to great!

Sincerely,



Marcus J. Newsome, Ed.D.