



Norfolk Public Schools

State of the Schools Address
2004 - 2005

DR. DENISE K. SCHNITZER
INTERIM SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

FULLY ACCREDITED SCHOOLS FOR 2004-2005

Granby High School	Bayview Elementary School
Maury High School	Calcott Elementary School
Norview High School	Camp Allen Elementary School
Lake Taylor High School	Crossroads Elementary School
B.T. Washington High School	Fairlawn Elementary School
	Ghent Elementary School
Azalea Gardens Middle School	Granby Elementary School
Blair Middle School	Ingleside Elementary School
Lafayette-Winona Middle School	Larchmont Elementary School
Northside Middle School	Larrymore Elementary School
Norview Middle School	Little Creek Elementary School
	Monroe Elementary School
	Norview Elementary School
	Oakwood Elementary School
	Oceanair Elementary School
	Ocean View Elementary School
	Poplar Halls Elementary School
	Sewells Point Elementary School
	Sherwood Forest Elementary School
	St. Helena Elementary School
	Tanners Creek Elementary School
	Tarrallton Elementary School
	W.H. Taylor Elementary School
	Tidewater Park Elementary School
	Willard Model School
	Willoughby Elementary School

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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DR. DENISE K. SCHNITZER
INTERIM SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

FEBRUARY 7, 2005



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State of the Schools Address

Good Evening. It is a pleasure to be here with you tonight to share the exciting news about Norfolk Public Schools' journey to world-class status. On a personal note, this has been a very exciting opportunity for me to spend my last year in Norfolk Public Schools as the Interim Superintendent. I would like to thank all of my colleagues in schools and the central office for the wonderful support they have offered this year. Also, I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge the contributions of our former superintendent, Dr. John O. Simpson, for having the vision to embark on this journey to world class. Dr. Simpson helped to lay the foundation upon which we are continuing to build.

So, I'd like to begin tonight with a show of hands: How many of you remember Mr. Rogers and his Neighborhood? I sure do. In fact, I can't think of a greater champion for children than Fred Rogers. So, I thought it would be particularly appropriate to begin with a quote from his book... The World According to Mister Rogers: Important Things to Remember:

"Imagining something may be the first step in making it happen, but it takes the real time and real efforts of real people to learn things, make things, turn thoughts into deeds or visions into inventions."

I am here tonight to tell you that the staff and students of Norfolk Public Schools have answered this call. They have taken "real time" and "real efforts" and have worked diligently to turn thoughts into action. The real efforts of real people have ensured that I can report to you that our district is very healthy... more schools have become fully accredited, achievement gaps between groups of students are narrowing in nearly every area, and Norfolk Public Schools has begun attracting national attention for its remarkable achievements. I can assure you this evening that Norfolk Public Schools will become a world-class school district by our self-proclaimed deadline of 2010.

We have made remarkable progress due to an emphasis on reading instruction. And we have spent considerable time assessing student reading performance and surveying our classrooms to ensure that the best instructional practices are being utilized and that students are achieving to their potential.

But reading is just the start. Norfolk Public Schools also is focusing on math proficiency. The district has placed math teacher specialists in 31 out of 35 elementary schools to assist our teachers in delivering the highest caliber of math instruction.

And, please know that our success has been accomplished with help from our "neighborhood." We have entered into partnerships with organizations

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such as Schooner VIRGINIA, Nauticus, Botanical Gardens, the Virginia Aquarium, and others. By participating in these learning opportunities, our students sharpen their problem solving skills and make connections between what they have learned and the world around them. In short, they become better prepared to face the challenges of the future.

Tonight, I would like to share a few stories with you about some of our outstanding students. We have many, but time permits me to introduce only a few. Roderick Nicholson, a first grader last year at Chesterfield Academy, placed first in Virginia and second in the nation in the Kids Philosophy Slam essay contest. Jasmine Weeks, a Tanners Creek third grader also earned a national second place award for her essay on pain and suffering during war. An eighth grader from Ruffner Middle School, Brandon Praileau, is in Richmond right now serving as a General Assembly page. I'm sure that you will agree that these students — and others like them that are armed with knowledge, skills and expertise — will be quite successful. Please join me in recognizing these students and their accomplishments.

We have said that we will be world class only when achievement gaps between all groups of students have been eliminated. And, I am proud to announce that the five-year gap between the scores of African-American and Caucasian students continues to decrease for all Standards of Learning tests. In fact, the gap has narrowed in Grade 3 mathematics by nearly 11 percentage points; Grade 5 English/Writing score gaps have decreased 19 percentage points; the Grade 8 History and Social Studies gap has decreased by nearly 19 percentage points; the Algebra I gap has decreased nearly 15 percentage points and the Algebra II gap has decreased by nearly 19 percentage points; and, finally, the World History II achievement gap has narrowed by more than 20 percentage points.

So you can see, closing the achievement gap is possible. It is possible because of the efforts of many. For example, JoBen Whittenburg, a fifth-grade teacher at Jacox Elementary School, uses the Reading Workshop method to address the learning differences of all his students — including those with special needs. The result: Whittenburg had 100 percent of his students ranked proficient on the SOL Reading test.

And, what about the 3rd and 5th grade instructional teams at Bowling Park Elementary School? They continue to spend countless hours after school and on weekends developing stronger instructional strategies to help their students achieve. They, too, are reaping the rewards of hard work. Fifth-grade scores on the math SOL rose from 29.2 percent to 83 percent and the third graders had a 100 percent pass rate in Math.

It is success like this that earned Norfolk Public Schools a spot as a finalist for the Broad Prize for Urban Education for the second year in a row. This honor means that in May we will have the opportunity to distribute another \$125,000 in Broad scholarship money to some of our graduating seniors.

THE FIVE-YEAR GAP BETWEEN THE SCORES OF AFRICAN-AMERICAN AND CAUCASIAN STUDENTS CONTINUES TO DECREASE FOR ALL STANDARDS OF LEARNING TESTS.

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“DISPELLING THE
MYTH” AWARD.**

These results also led to Norfolk Public Schools and Norview High School being recognized by The Education Trust with DisPELLing the Myth Awards. These awards honor high performing schools and school districts that utilize high expectations and hard work to dispel the devastating myth that poor and minority children cannot achieve at high levels. What tremendous recognition for the hard work put in by so many of our teachers, students and administrators. Please join me in recognizing their efforts.

Before we move on, I would like to thank a very special member of our staff. Each spring, we recognize the Teachers of the Year selected by each school at a banquet. During that event, we also name a Teacher of the Year for the district — a teacher who goes above and beyond the call of duty and represents the very best that the teaching profession has to offer. Tonight, it is my pleasure to introduce to you Norfolk’s Teacher of the Year — Sandra Masterman of Willard Model School.

I also would like to take a moment to draw your attention to the publication you received tonight — Mileposts. You will find more information about our gap closures and other performance indicators in the center spread of the newsletter.

Thus far, we have focused on the ethnic achievement gaps found in our system, but we know that we must close ALL achievement gaps. As a result, we have begun to disaggregate our data to examine gaps between socio-economic groups, male and female students, special education and non-special education populations, and others. In the coming years, you will hear more about our efforts to close all of these gaps. This work is especially important considering the mandate for making Adequate Yearly Progress under the No Child Left Behind Act.

I am incredibly proud of the progress we have made. But, there is much more work to do. Despite gap closures of 20 points or more, we still find subject areas where the scores of one group surpass those of another by as much as 20 points — for example, Grade 5 Science, Grade 8 English Literature and Research, Geometry, Earth Science, and World Geography. These are areas where we need much more work to close the larger gaps. Make no mistake, we have moved mountains in narrowing the gaps, but we have more mountains to move. Fortunately, Norfolk Public Schools has identified best practices that can correct this problem. Fortunately, we are a district guided by data.

Closing the achievement gap is a critical focus for Norfolk Public Schools, but it isn’t the only one. We believe not only in equity, but also excellence for all students. It would be very easy to close the achievement gap by “putting the brakes” on the top performers until the differences in scores disappear. But I am pleased to report that progress for one group of students in Norfolk does not come at the expense of others.

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The Standards of Learning scores for all students continues to rise. Elementary school SOL pass rates exceeded state benchmarks for eight of nine subjects, middle school SOL pass rates exceeded state benchmarks for four of five subjects, and high school SOL pass rates exceeded state benchmarks for eleven of twelve subjects.

Four years ago, we had only two schools fully accredited. Will the principals of those schools named on the screen please stand and remain standing? Not only did they become accredited four years ago, they have maintained that status. Three years ago, four more schools joined their ranks. These schools have also maintained their accreditation. I ask the principals of these four schools to stand and remain standing. Two years ago, we added seven more schools and they too maintained accreditation. Let's have those principals to stand now. And, last year, we added 13 more schools that achieved full accreditation. I ask those principals to please stand. Take a look around you. This is an impressive list. I also would ask any teachers or staff members from these schools to stand. Please join me in congratulating these schools and their staffs on their accomplishments.

This year, I am pleased to announce that the trend continues and we have added another 10 to the list of schools that are fully accredited. And tonight, we will present these schools with their SOL Accreditation Flags. I ask that the principal of each school called come forward to be congratulated by the Chief Academic Officer, Dr. Thom Lockamy, and the Executive Directors, Dr. Melinda Boone, Dr. Linda O'Konek, and Dr. James Victory:

- Bayview Elementary School
- Fairlawn Elementary School
- Norview Elementary School
- Oakwood Elementary School
- Oceanair Elementary School
- Tanners Creek Elementary School
- Azalea Gardens Middle School
- Lafayette Winona Middle School
- Northside Middle School
- Norview Middle School

Also, our newest middle school, The School of International Studies at Meadowbrook, did not have an 8th-grade class taking the SOLs last year. We know that this year's class of 8th graders will do well, because the school has met or exceeded all of their benchmarks and are on target to be fully accredited. Ms. Jackie Colander, Principal of Meadowbrook, would you please stand? Please join me in congratulating these schools.

As a data-driven district, we are firm believers in having proof. Tonight, I have shared some of these data with you. More are listed in Mileposts. Even more information on how our schools are performing is available in the Executive Summary and District Performance Report. This document is available online and provides a wealth of information about our progress.

**ELEMENTARY
SCHOOL SOL PASS
RATES EXCEEDED
STATE BENCHMARKS
FOR EIGHT OF NINE
SUBJECTS, MIDDLE
SCHOOL SOL PASS
RATES EXCEEDED
STATE BENCHMARKS
FOR FOUR OF FIVE
SUBJECTS, AND
HIGH SCHOOL SOL
PASS RATES
EXCEEDED STATE
BENCHMARKS FOR
ELEVEN OF TWELVE
SUBJECTS.**

**FOUR YEARS AGO,
NPS HAD ONLY TWO
SCHOOLS FULLY
ACCREDITED. THIS
YEAR, 36 HAVE
EARNED FULL
ACCREDITATION.**

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**PERFORMANCE
REPORTS FOR THE
DISTRICT AND EACH
SCHOOL ARE
AVAILABLE ONLINE.**

**NPS WAS AWARDED
THE MEDALLION
FOR PERFORMANCE
EXCELLENCE — THE
TOP HONOR OF THE
U.S. SENATE
PRODUCTIVITY AND
QUALITY AWARD.**

Additionally, each school posts its individual performance report on its home page. Be sure to visit us on the web to check this information out. Your child's principal and teachers can talk to you about this report and what it means for each student in the building.

I have to tell you that it is an amazing time to be serving as Interim Superintendent of Schools — amazing because not only has it become apparent to us that our hard work is paying off, but also because others across the country are recognizing this as well. I already mentioned our status as a finalist for the Broad Prize and our receipt of the Dispelling the Myth Award. But that's not all. Last year Norfolk Public Schools received the Plaque for Progress and Performance Excellence — the second level of the United States Senate Productivity and Quality Award. This year NPS won the Medallion for Performance Excellence - the top honor. This state award mirrors the prestigious national Baldrige Award... an award given annually to organizations that demonstrate continuous improvement supported by best practices, strategic planning, customer focus, information and analysis, and a human resources focus. Our School Board also was recognized by the Council of Urban Boards of Education for its commitment to accountability and its efforts to more fully engage the community on our public schools. On a personal note, I, again, would like to recognize members of our School Board, and thank them for their support and encouragement over the past several months.

But that's not all. The Pennsylvania Department of Education recently developed the PAGE 1 initiative to help their under-performing schools jump start achievement. As part of this program, the Pennsylvania Department of Education brought administrators, teachers and community members from its troubled schools to Norfolk to visit schools that have dramatically increased student performance — schools such as Ghent Elementary, Northside Middle, and Norview High. The Department of Education's goal was quite simple: to prove that it could be done — to prove that urban students can achieve at high levels.

But that's not all. Over the past year, two different newspapers — the St. Petersburg, Florida Times and The Trenton, New Jersey Times — sent investigative reporters to spend several days in our schools talking to teachers and students about the quality of education in Norfolk. Their conclusions were remarkably similar: Great things are happening in Norfolk Public Schools. Teachers are utilizing best practices and holding high expectations for all students. In turn, the students are achieving at ever increasing levels. Norfolk Public Schools has put itself on the national education map — a fact reinforced by the featuring of Norview High School in last week's edition of Education Week — the National Education Newspaper of Record.

Even with all this fanfare and recognition, we still have challenges to overcome. If we are to provide world-class educational opportunities to ALL students, we must improve our four-year graduation rate. Right now,

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approximately three-fourths of our students graduate from high school in four years. We must do better. We must ensure that the students who are most vulnerable to failure in the ninth grade have the supports they need and stay in school. Our high schools are implementing “freshman success” programs to combat this challenge, but this is more than a high school problem. Ensuring children graduate on time requires not only a PreK-12 effort. It requires the assistance of the whole “neighborhood.”

If a student is to be successful and graduate from high school, he or she must be reading on grade level in elementary school and acquiring vital basic skills. He or she must begin accessing more rigorous courses in middle school and solidify a firm academic foundation. But these things are less likely to happen without the support of the community. You must encourage your children to value education. You must read with them. You must require that they complete their homework correctly. You must hold them accountable for their achievement and actions. And, you must keep them in rigorous courses such as Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, Honors, and dual enrollment college offerings. We all must do better to ensure that not only my child, but also our children do the best they possibly can in our schools.

I’m not going to sing it, but I will make the plea: “Won’t you be my neighbor?” Won’t you help me — and every other educator in Norfolk Public Schools — help the children of Norfolk reach their potential? Won’t you be a part of the team for improving academic achievement? That is what a neighborhood does!

We know that the traditional high school setting does not work for all students. Some need greater flexibility. Some need a greater challenge. I am pleased to report that by the end of this year, all five of our high schools will be offering specialty programs — the International Baccalaureate Program at Granby High School, the Medical and Health Sciences Program at Maury High School, the Leadership and Engineering Academy at Norview High School, the Leadership and Military Sciences Academy at Lake Taylor High School, and, the final addition, the Communications Academy of the Arts at Booker T. Washington High School.

But this effort does not end with the specialty programs in our high schools. On the last Sunday in January, we joined with Tidewater Community College in celebrating the opening of Middle College High School. This program allows juniors and seniors to complete their high school requirements while taking classes on the downtown campus of TCC. Students will have access to all the resources of the community college and the opportunity to earn college credit for their work. Just one week ago, 32 juniors began taking classes at TCC. Next year, we anticipate even more students entering the program.

While we know we have much work left to do to strengthen the high school

ENSURING THAT ALL STUDENTS ARE SUCCESSFUL AFTER GRADUATION REQUIRES COMMITMENT FROM THE ENTIRE COMMUNITY.

EXPANDED OFFERINGS INCLUDE SPECIALTY PROGRAMS AT EACH HIGH SCHOOL AND THE NEW MIDDLE COLLEGE HIGH SCHOOL OPENED IN PARTNERSHIP WITH TIDEWATER COMMUNITY COLLEGE.

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**GRADUATES IN THE
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experience and to ensure that it adequately prepares our students for the future, we know that many of our graduates already are successful. Graduates in the class of 2004 earned nearly \$12.6 million in scholarships and went on to prestigious colleges, universities and trade programs — a great accomplishment!

It is truly a pleasure to hold this address in one of our newest facilities. Please join me in thanking principal Marjorie Stealey for opening the building to the community tonight. Thank you for your hospitality. As you can tell, this is a wonderful building. What you might not be able to see this evening is that work also has begun on the athletic fields and the stadium. We anticipate the entire project will be completed by spring.

We also have another construction project underway — the Blair Middle School. The temporary facilities for Blair also have been completed. This includes a temporary cafeteria, mobile classrooms and a temporary gym which allows us to keep students at the school while working on the renovation project. If you pass by the school, you will notice that the steel structure for the addition is beginning to be assembled. We anticipate that the addition and renovation will be completed during the 2006-2007 school year.

Finally, we are eagerly awaiting the completion of the new stadium for Maury and Granby high schools at Lambert's Point on Powhatan Avenue. This is a joint effort funded by the school system and the city. We anticipate that the construction will be complete in Fall 2005.

I'll leave you this evening with one final thought from Mr. Rogers— and then I'll let you get back to your own neighborhood. Mr. Rogers explains, ***"When I was a boy I used to think that strong meant having big muscles, great physical power; but the longer I live, the more I realize that real strength has much more to do with what is not seen. Real strength has to do with helping others."***

Many of our students have taken this statement to heart and joined with staff throughout the district to help those suffering from the effects of the Indian Ocean Tsunami. Immediately after this tragedy, we began hearing that various fundraisers and relief efforts were being planned. The schools graciously agreed to join a district-wide effort to raise \$1 per student — approximately \$36,000. For the last month, various schools and departments have been collecting money, and I am pleased to announce that, as of tonight, we have collected approximately \$32,700 for the tsunami victims. And, in addition, many schools are aiding the victims through various efforts such as school supply collections.

This is especially appropriate since this disaster has impacted the lives of our staff and students. Afzhalul Samyonon's, an Easton Preschool student, and his two brothers, Abraham and Ahmad, who attend Larchmont

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Elementary School, lost many family members during the tragedy. Their family is from Indonesia. Easton staff members wanted to help. They collected \$800 and gave it directly to the family so that the money could be shared with the surviving family members. Others have lost friends and relatives, too. Still others have loved ones serving with relief efforts in Indonesia.

As a district, we will donate the money collected to UNICEF because of its focus on children helping children.. There is no greater example of this than Reo Jones, a 5th-grade student at Crossroads Elementary School. When she heard of the difficulties facing the tsunami survivors, she brought her piggy bank to school and gave it ALL. She donated the \$131.27 she had collected over the last four years. Reo and her grandmother, Margaret Boykins, are with us tonight. I ask them to stand and I ask you to join me in thanking them and all the students and staff of Norfolk Public Schools that contributed to this worthy cause. Another noteworthy effort took place at Northside Middle School where special needs students made bookmarks with the message "Helping hands, caring hearts." They sold for \$1, and the students collected \$1,600 to contribute to their school's campaign which totals \$2,068. These are but a few examples. We still have a handful of schools that are finishing up their fundraising efforts this month and we hope that these final efforts will help us exceed our goal of \$36,000.

You also can make a difference right here in our neighborhood. Friday, February 25th, the Norfolk Council of PTAs, Norfolk Public Schools, the Norfolk Kiwanis Clubs and the City of Norfolk, will host the annual J. Frank Sellew Scholarship Auction at the Norfolk Airport Hilton to raise money to help graduating seniors pay for college or trade programs. The Silent Auction begins at 6 p.m. and the Live Auction hosted by Peter Decker will begin at 7:30 p.m. If you can, please come out and support these scholarship efforts.

Although by the end of this year I will trade my business attire for comfortable clothes and change my dress shoes for tennis shoes as Mr. Rogers did, I can assure you that the work of the district is moving forward during this time of transition. Gaps continue to close, expectations for performance continue to rise above state benchmarks and children continue to succeed despite the odds. I look forward to hearing about Norfolk's continued success next year when a new leader stands at this podium. I look forward to 2010 when Norfolk Public Schools will be declared a model of world-class education.

And now, I would like to thank the Norfolk Council of PTAs for their service to our children and schools. And I would like to thank you for the opportunity to address you this evening and for the opportunity to serve you and your children as Interim Superintendent of Schools. Ladies and gentlemen, it is a great time to be in the neighborhood! Good night and have a safe trip home.

**NORFOLK PUBLIC
SCHOOLS STUDENTS
AND STAFF RAISED
OVER \$32,000 TO
AID VICTIMS OF THE
RECENT TSUNAMI.**

**MAKE PLANS TO
ATTEND THE
J. FRANK SELLEW
SCHOLARSHIP
AUCTION
ON FEBRUARY 25
AT 6 P.M.**



Norfolk Public Schools

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