

Starting a Revolution in Public Education



Dr. Stephen Jones
Superintendent of Schools

August 31, 2006 — Superintendent Stephen Jones delivered his All-Staff Address at Lake Taylor High School charting a course for the school system on the next leg of its journey to world-class status.

Jones shared a quote from Dr. Jeff Howard that describes an entire

school system committed to the success of all children as a “revolutionary” concept. Jones notes that Norfolk’s revolution has begun and urges all staff to adopt the cause as their own. He highlighted several key points:

- If the district is truly to become a world-class school system by the year 2010, we must face a significant adaptive challenge — we must ensure that all staff, parents and community members truly believe that every single student can succeed. We must change our hearts and minds and build a culture of universal belief that “ALL” truly does mean ALL.

- Referencing Howard’s Efficacy Paradigm [see page 2], Jones emphasized the fact that any student who works hard can “get smart.” The false premise about intelligence that “you have it or you don’t” has dominated public education for years. We must continue to hold high expectations and work diligently with every student.

- Loyalty will be a critical factor. Achieving world-class status will be impossible unless we recognize that we are a family and support each other accordingly. Staff must speak positively about the district to outside audiences and defend their peers. That doesn’t mean that we ignore problems. We must be constructive critics internally and have difficult conversations with our peers and supervisors — offering support for continued growth and improvement.

- We must claim ownership for our students. For too long, educators and communities alike have talked about what to do for “those” children (poor students and students of color). These children are not someone else’s responsibility. They are OURS. Each of us must be willing to say “These children are MY children” and to hold ourselves personally accountable for ensuring they achieve at high levels. All staff members regardless of job title contribute to student success and reaching our goals. This commitment to teaching all students must extend to the community as well.

SEE MORE

The full text of this speech can be found at www.npsk12.com/pressroom

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Achieving the Mission: Proficiency for All Children

July 19, 2006 — Dr. Jeff Howard of the Efficacy Institute delivered the opening day keynote address for the 2006 NPS Administrators



Dr. Jeff Howard
Efficacy Institute

Convocation. He presented on the idea of “efficacy” for all students. He defines efficacy as the capacity to mobilize the effort of adults and children toward development — the achievement of successive, targeted learning outcomes. Key points from his presentation include:

- The critical question regarding academic proficiency is: Do they know it and can they use it?
- Throughout the years, many have subscribed to the “innate ability paradigm,” which says intelligence is unequally distributed. In short, ability is fixed and failure to accomplish a task or skill indicates the upper limit of ability and the futility of continued effort. The “efficacy paradigm,” however, argues that everyone has enough intellectual capacity for challenging, complex work. People can become more intelligent through the application of effective effort.
- The efficacy paradigm is supported by neuroscience and studies of expert performance. Scientific studies show us that the brain responds to sustained effort at new challenges by forming new mental circuits. Studies of expert performers (musicians and athletes) show that the highest levels of expertise are based on as much as ten years of extraordinary practice.
- It is the responsibility of educators to direct this effective effort and help students “get smart.”

For more information, visit www.efficacy.org.

Leadership & Learning in Norfolk Public Schools

July 20, 2006 — Dr. Doug Reeves presented the second keynote for Convocation. He focused his comments on effective leadership as a



Dr. Doug Reeves
Center for Performance
Assessment

method for bolstering student achievement and realizing the vision of world-class schools:

- Dr. Reeves argues that your calendar tells the world what you really value. School leaders should ensure their time is being spent on tasks that provide the most leverage.
- Teacher and leadership assignments must be purposeful and effective. Allocation of “people resources” directly impacts student achievement. Are our most experienced, most effective teachers working with the students most in need?
- The importance of feedback and recognition cannot be understated. You must provide opportunities for coaching and reflection to ensure growth. Students and teachers also must celebrate “short-term wins” to reinforce effective learning behaviors and sustain change.
- Leaders must “tell the story” every day to every available audience.
- Defining Moments for Leaders: **Communicate** feedback that is accurate, specific and timely. **Confront** challenges to core values. Build **confidence and trust** in colleagues. Be willing to **compromise** on non-essentials. Ensure **consistency** between your words and behavior. **Cherish** people as valuable human beings apart from their jobs.

Visit www.makingstandardswork.org for more.

World-Class Leadership for World-Class Schools

July 21, 2006 — Dr. Jones concluded Convocation with a keynote address linking effective leadership to the “revolution” taking place in Norfolk Public Schools.



Dr. Stephen Jones
Superintendent of Schools

- Achieving world-class status by the year 2010 will require tremendous focus. Everything we do must be centered on our desire to meet this target.

- We must continue to analyze data and use it to drive our instructional

practices and our decisions.

- We must place the needs of our students first. Every accountability plan and every action we take must support our strategic plan.

- As leaders, we must connect employees in need of development with more experienced staff members — employees known for rigorous, creative lessons that achieve results. This will bring high quality instruction to scale.

- We must embrace the adaptive challenge of removing personal biases and truly expect the highest level of work from all students. We must let go of the false notion that intelligence is fixed at birth.

- We must see ourselves not as a “system of schools,” but as a school system — various components working together for a common end. We must remember our “system” is made up of human beings and focus on the importance of building and maintaining relationships.

SEE MORE

The full text of this speech can be found at www.npsk12.com/pressroom

Parenting Students for Powerful Literacy

Sept. 7, 2006 — School Board member Lillian Wright spoke to parents at Campostella Elementary School during the first week of school.



Dr. Lillian Wright
School Board Member

She discussed “powerful literacy” and why it is important. She offered the following tips to parents for supporting the growth of powerful literacy in their children:

- Take advantage of early childhood education for all your children. The sooner

students master basic skills, the better their chance for success in later years.

- Be sure children attend school every day. They cannot learn and excel unless they are in class.

- Encourage reading. Take your child to the library. Have books, magazines and newspapers available in your home. Read to your child any chance you get. Read books together and discuss what is happening in the story.

- Talk about college with your child starting in pre-K. Students have to know that attending college is possible. Talk about where they would like to go and what they want to study.

- Talk regularly with your child's teachers and principal. If there are problems, offer to be a part of the solution. Ensure your child takes advantage of opportunities for extra help and accelerated learning.

- Success is hard work. Make sure children complete all homework and assignments. Don't let your child take a less challenging class because it is easier. Hard work now pays off later.

Hard Work and Parent Connections Key to Goals



Barry Bishop
School Board Chair

Sept. 28, 2006 — School Board Chair Barry Bishop spoke at the Council of PTAs Parent/Principal Kick-Off Dinner about the challenges facing Norfolk Public Schools:

- NPS has made tremendous gains because of its commitment to accountability and hard work.

Recent reports regarding middle school math scores demonstrate that we still have work to do. We have rolled up our sleeves and are working to make changes.

- The “story behind the headlines” demonstrates a track record of success: 34 of 35 elementary schools fully accredited, student performance increasing in all content areas, 15 schools scored greater than 90% passing on fourth grade English SOLs, achievement gaps continue to decrease, all five high schools fully accredited, and middle schools averaging 92% pass rate on writing SOLs. We can make the needed changes to ensure all middle school students pass the math SOLs and that all schools are accredited.

- NPS is committed not to becoming the best urban school system, but also to becoming a world-class school system — a district able to compete with any other in the world. Achieving this goal required parental and community support. We need parents and community leaders to share the story of our successes and to support our efforts to make improvements wherever necessary.

- We need to take a hard look at what we are doing and ensure that we are focused on the tasks and strategies that will make the most difference in terms of student achievement.

Norfolk Public Schools *PostScript*

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World-Class by 2010

Norfolk Public Schools will become a world-class school system by the year 2010. In a world-class school system:

- All students possess the habits of powerful literacy.
- All gaps are eliminated while increasing achievement for all.
- All schools exceed local, state, national, and international benchmarks.
- All students are prepared to access productive options and opportunities upon graduation.

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