

Journal 23

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The Fundamentals of Doing Business

Hello. I'm Del Burns, superintendent of the Wake County Public School System.

Next week, November 15 through 21, is American Education Week. It's a nation-wide celebration of the importance of our teachers and the support staff, volunteers, and parents who do so much to make our classrooms work for children. But more than that, it raises awareness about the critical need to provide every child with a quality public education.

American public education has its challenges, and all of us are involved in continuously improving our schools. I am proud to be the superintendent of this school system. Looking beyond our students' academic performance, I see more than 18,000 employees dedicating themselves to supporting our children each day regardless of the title of their job. It isn't an easy task. Our schools need constant attention and support in order to continue promoting effective learning and teaching for our students.

Over the past few weeks, we've been talking about the four strategic directives governing our school system. The third is a long-winded phrase, but it comes down to building and improving the infrastructure that ultimately supports our classrooms. That third strategic directive is: develop and implement systems and organizational structures to support schools, ensure accountability, and engage our community.

The key words there are systems and structures. We have made continuous process improvement a strategic focus within the Wake County Public School System, because we have higher standards to meet in a rapidly changing world. Just a few things we've done have been to incorporate sophisticated business approaches into our operations as we support our schools. From hiring a chief business officer, to auditing our curriculum, to organizing our employee teams to be more effective and responsive, we are improving the fundamental ways we are doing business.

Each of our schools and departments have identified their mission, vision, and core values, and develop goals based on them that are not only challenging, but measurable. This work throughout the system is setting the foundation for how we will do business in the months and years ahead plus be accountable to the community. It also allows us to respond to unforeseen challenges when they arise without derailing our focus of supporting your child and his or her work in the classroom.

All of this doesn't happen by itself. It takes careful attention to the alignment of our work -- making sure all of our schools and departments are on the same page in supporting our students, and that we are all working toward the same vision of all of our students graduating on time, prepared for the future.

During a week of celebrating American education, it's important to recognize all of the pieces -- both in the foreground and background -- that not only keep our schools operating, but can and

must be systematically improved in order to promote learning and teaching.

We'll talk more about how we support schools, ensure accountability, and engage our community in coming editions of my Journal.

Thanks, and I look forward to talking to you soon.