

Journal 17: Who We Are Meant to Be -- Our Mission, Vision and Goal

October 2, 2009

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

Today the Wake County Public School System serves more than 140,000 students and their families. Our community depends on our schools to contribute to the quality of life that we enjoy which attracts both families and businesses to Wake County. I've said before that we are a people-powered and purpose-driven enterprise. Our excellent teachers dedicate themselves to our students every day, and those of us who serve in other functions are aligned to support learning and teaching as well.

Our mission is clear, "The Wake County Public School System will educate each student to be a responsible and productive citizen who can effectively manage future challenges." Now "effectively manage future challenges" isn't exactly a phrase advertising executives would have come up with, but when you think about it, isn't that at the heart of what every parent wishes for their child? As parents, we see our children grow older each day, walking -- or sometimes running -- toward adulthood, and we do everything we can to prepare them for meeting the challenges we know will be coming their way. So as a school system, we also recognize our duty to help every student prepare themselves for their future.

A mission statement simply describes what an organization is meant to do. But to what end? That is what a vision statement is -- it's an articulation of what success will look like -- a statement of who we are meant to be. In 2006 we adopted this vision: A community of caring stakeholders (parents, teachers, administrators, and staff) will successfully work collaboratively with support from the broader community to ensure that every child educated in the Wake County Public School System graduates on time, prepared for the future. It is what we aspire to achieve as an organization. When we speak of every child, we mean without exception; that is a moral vision for our school system

By adopting that vision, we aligned our work and have focused more closely on the needs of our schools and individual students. Every employee in the Wake County Public School System recognizes we must play our role in helping our students graduate on time, prepared for the future. I often hear bus drivers talking about "bringing their babies safely to school each morning," or special needs teachers describing that this isn't a job but their passion in life.

To work toward our vision becoming a reality, it helps to have clear goals along the way. On December 2, 2008, the Wake County Board of Education unanimously adopted a goal that left nothing to the imagination. It's a two-part goal: WCPSS students will demonstrate high academic growth; by 2014, all students will graduate on-time prepared to compete globally.

Our goal is for all students, regardless of ability, to achieve high growth every year, and for our graduation rate to steadily increase until 2014 -- when we want to have a 100 percent graduation rate. I've often said that's a high bar. In fact, it's the highest. But our schools share the same responsibilities as our families and our communities to look after every child -- to show them the way to prepare for a successful future while teaching them the value of hard work and self-

sufficiency.

After all, isn't that what we want? There's a famous quote that states "we must want for all children, that which we want for our child."

Our mission, vision and goals are clear statements of what our school system is meant to be and what it is meant to become. And, most importantly, they place our students' success as the most important priority for the Wake County Public School System -- as it should be.

Thanks, and I will talk to you again soon.