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

Our focus on learning and teaching is our school system's highest priority -- it's our first strategic directive. We'll discuss the other three strategic directives in the coming weeks, but today I wanted to talk with you about just two of the systematic changes we've made during the last few years to better support learning and teaching.

This week our chief academic officer, Dr. Donna Hargens, gave the Wake County Board of Education an update on our progress as we reach the midpoint of implementing the recommendations from the curriculum management audit. Back in 2007, I asked our school board to commit to this comprehensive, independent audit of our core business to find ways to improve how we help children in the classroom.

The results of the audit showed that we were a good school system, but the report had eight broad recommendation areas with 117 action steps that will help us move toward becoming a great school system. Responding to those recommendations is a time-consuming and complicated process. However we are moving through our implementation plan and today, while we are at the halfway point, we have addressed more than 75 percent of the recommendations. When we are finished, our academic programs and our written, taught and tested curricula will be aligned. But what is equally important is that our business functions will also be aligned to provide the needed support throughout our school system.

In addition, we have created audit teams which have begun taking this same process directly to support individual schools as they look for opportunities to improve what they do. You see, what began as a broad, system-wide look at how we do business is now honing in with the same strategies to improve our individual schools and classrooms.

If you want more information, we have a complete Curriculum Management Resource Center on our website that includes the full, 400-page report, along with summaries, progress reports and other information you might find useful.

Another systematic change we have implemented is the creation of professional learning teams in every school in the county. We are incorporating the same operational improvement strategies the business community has used for years. Each Wednesday, your child's teachers meet to share information about their students' academic progress and discuss ways they can work together to get the best results for your child.

All children learn differently. Teachers each have different strengths, or approach some areas with more effectiveness than others. By blending information and teaching strategies, our children get the benefit of every teacher's strengths and skills.

The next step in this process is for us to develop ways for these teams of teachers to communicate their progress directly with you as we work together to increase accountability

throughout the organization.

These are just two examples of the strategies setting the foundation for long-term, sustainable improvement in learning and teaching, our first strategic directive in the Wake County Public School System. Next week, we'll talk for a bit about the second of our strategic directives: retaining, recruiting and training high quality employees at all levels of the school system.

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