



## *Providing Quality Instructional Practices*



**Director's  
Message**  
*Dr. Lisa Floyd*

In our first edition of EduTopics we shared information regarding Goal 1 and strategies identified to assist us.

In this edition we highlight Strategic Planning Goal 2: Providing Quality Instructional Practices.

One of the first strategies the Education Leadership Team implemented was clearly articulating instructional and learning days through the school calendar. An assessment calendar was also created to identify the specific tests we administer and when they occur. These calendars were shared throughout the facilities.

The Education Leadership Team brought a renewed focus on use of data to make instructional decisions through participation in the Harvard Data Wise Institute. This initiative assists educators in using multiple pieces of data for continuous improvement of teaching and learning. We also reviewed data to evaluate delivery of services to students who are separated from the general population. Processes were established to monitor content delivery, duration of service, and compliance with IEP needs.

The Leadership Team focused on shifting the culture to a collaborative process by adding dedicated planning periods and team planning for teachers in the master schedule. Weekly lesson plan templates provide a framework that allows administrators to review planned instruction as they conduct

weekly walkthroughs and quarterly evaluations. Content assessments through our Power School Assessment software are administered to youth to assess knowledge of specific Standards of Learning. Teachers review reports and compare with classwork, grades, and other data sources to adjust instruction.

The Virginia Tiered System of Supports (VTSS) is a recognized approach to support positive academic and behavioral outcomes for all students. Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) is the behavioral component of the VTSS. The Division of Education laid a foundation for teachers to better respond to student behaviors through implementation of our Responsibility-Centered Discipline model. Teachers use this process for responding to classroom disruptions.

### *Strategic Plan Goals*

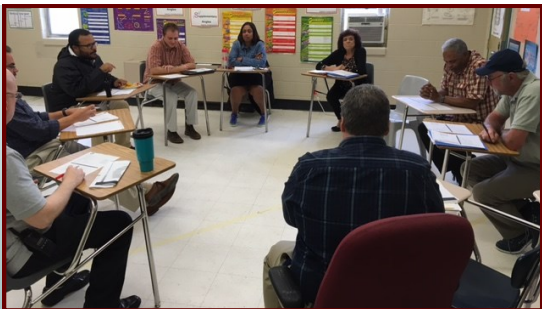
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|---|----------|
| Commit to Recruitment, Retention, and Evaluation of Quality Staff | 1        |
| <b><i>PROVIDE QUALITY INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES</i></b>             | <b>2</b> |
| Develop and Maintain Effective Communication Among Stakeholders   | 3        |
| Establish and Implement Data Analysis Systems                     | 4        |
| Ensure Compliance in Educational Programs                         | 5        |

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A component of this program is our Reflection Room, which provides a place for youth to respond to, and take ownership of, their behaviors through a series of exercises and writings. Our partnership with Commonwealth Autism has provided the Division of Education with a full time Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA) to be on site for this school year. He has worked with teachers in classrooms, collected and reviewed student behavioral data, and researched behavior intervention models applicable to our setting.

We continue to address our school offerings for diploma seeking youth by reviewing transcripts and adjusting course offerings based on those needs. We review staff placement to provide appropriate course coverage, attend to student remedial needs, and assist with our online options. All of these are adjusted each semester. We continue to review high school course offerings to ensure students can seamlessly enroll in career and college ready post-secondary offerings that will benefit them.

The single most important factor in determining the quality of education a student receives is the quality of his/her teacher. The Education Leadership Team ensures our teachers are current with instructional best practices through robust professional development opportunities. From *Keeping Good Teachers*, edited by Marge Scherer, "Watching a great teacher at the top of his or her form is like watching a great surgical or artistic performance. Although infinitely difficult and painstakingly planned, great teaching appears effortless and seamless. One can easily believe that it is the simplest thing in the world—until one tries to do it."



## TEACHER SPOTLIGHT

by William Mastine

I am always amazed at the various and diverse paths, physical, academic, and geographic, that this otherwise small faculty has taken to arrive under the razor wire. We have an exceptional teacher here who traces her family roots back more than 300 years to the Martinsville area. In case you are not good at math, that's after the Mayflower, but before Thomas Jefferson. Her family is actually the subject of a best-selling novel about one of Virginia's most famous families, one that is said to be the largest, and at one time one of the wealthiest, in the United States! How about that? Check it out, it's "The Hairstons", by H. Wienczek, 2000.

This is none other than our own Ms. Angela Bolling. Ms. Bolling has been teaching in our facilities for over thirty years. She started at Bon Air teaching the girls, went to R& DC, then Oakridge, and finally Beaumont. Anyone who has ever been in her class knows what a competent teacher she is. Ms. Bolling's talents go way beyond teaching!

You see, Ms. Bolling is our VAAP (Virginia Alternative Assessment Program) teacher. For those of you who are not familiar with VAAP, it is a program for students with significant cognitive disabilities. As the VAAP teacher you are responsible for producing written evidence by way of work product, testing, projects, exercises, videos; whatever will show a competency in a given academic area that will lead to credit being awarded. To do this, the VAAP teacher has to assemble, accumulate and mark each piece of "evidence", much like a piece of evidence in a court of law. I did this one year for a single student in just math, and the process was excruciating to say the least.

So, what's the big deal, you non-believers are thinking? Ms. Bolling currently is teaching three VAAP students, and we all know that any half-baked newbie out of college is able to teach three students, even in here! On paper you are correct. However, Ms Bolling is tasked with teaching her class Math, Science, History, English, Career Exploration, and Life Skills, while adapting and creating the curriculum for all six areas, lesson plans included, from the ASOLs and Applied Studies curriculum. If you are counting, this would result in the creation of up to 18 pieces of evidence per day which must be tagged, graded and filed in a plastic sheet in each student's binder. My friend the Oracle spoke recently to his friends Hercules and Atlas, and both agreed that Bolling does more than could they.

How, you may ask again? Ms. Bolling is a combination of your grandmother and your drill sergeant. She does not realize it, but when she is describing to me what one of her students has accomplished, her face actually has this warm glow to it akin to a grandmother describing her favorite grandchild's dance recital! Don't be fooled, however, Ms. Bolling also has "the look", and when Ms. Bolling gives you "the look", it's time to get out of Dodge, because it's about to get ugly. Combine all of that with her commanding persona, and you have one heck of a teacher!

We all know that teaching in a facility is not for the faint of heart or the timid soul. Who knows, perhaps Ms. Bolling's background and world experience has had some part in her success and given her the additional strength needed to survive here for 30 years. Whatever the reason, our children are lucky to have her.