



EDU TOPICS

Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice

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Goal 3: Communicating With Stakeholders



Director's Message
Dr. Lisa Floyd

In this edition of *EduTopics*, we focus on the third of the five goals in our Education Strategic Plan: Develop/Maintain Effective Communication Among Stakeholders.

Good communication affirms the Division of Education's strategic goals, clarifies information for specific audiences, frames processes, identifies resources and staff assignments, solicits collaborative input as appropriate, and presents data for multiple audiences.

Student achievement and instruction must be based on data, not perception, so our first strategy focuses on use of data. Our participation in the Harvard Data Wise Leadership Institute taught us to use data more effectively to improve teaching and learning, laying a foundation to create a culture of systematic and thoughtful examination of a variety of data. Data Teams met throughout the year, and continue to meet, to identify possible areas of concern and plan and implement practical academic strategies.

Review of data is collaborative work and requires time together and is often accomplished in meetings. Meetings

are potentially the most important venue where staff and organizational learning can take place. Meeting planning is a high-leverage strategy for changing how people work together for school improvement. "Meeting Wise: Making the Most of Collaborative Time for Educators" helped us make a fundamental shift in how we think about meetings we schedule. As time is the most precious commodity for an educator, we implemented Meeting Wise strategies to improve the meeting process. Our agendas provide leveling strategies for group participation, provide norms to ensure staff are fully engaged in the discussion(s), and set parameters to ensure quality meetings occur through time management. This strategy made our agendas excellent communication tools. Meeting minutes are shared. As minutes are built from the agendas, they offer details for the readers.

We also are working on our inter-agency relationships. Weekly meetings are scheduled with the Acting Deputy Director of Residential Services to collaborate on items that affect both departments and to review ways of best disseminating information. Building administrators participate in facility staff meetings. In this way, education collaborates with Residential Services and creates a strong

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<i>Strategic Plan Goals</i>	
1	Commit to Recruitment, Retention, and Evaluation of Quality Staff
2	Provide Quality Instructional Practices
3	Develop/Maintain Effective Communication Among Stakeholders
4	Establish and Implement Data Analysis Systems
5	Ensure Compliance in Educational Programs

Hackett Brings World Of Experience

By William Mastine

How do you get to Beaumont JCC from Libya?

In the case of our instructor T. Michael Hackett, it was a circuitous route with his military family, as well as his own service with the U.S. Air Force, that took him throughout Europe before landing here in Virginia. He was born in Tripoli, and

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Michael Hackett

Goal 3

partnership as opposed to working in silos.

Other inter-agency contacts include discussions with the Technology Department as we add instructional technology to classrooms and increase online college options. We are having discussions with Human Resources and the Virginia Public Safety Training Center to review tuition assistance and additional educational training options. These are important conversations. We hired a business manager to provide a level of support for building level purchases. She has fostered positive relationships with procurement and the finance department to streamline our processes.

As we downsize from Beaumont to Bon Air, we are having discussions regarding the transfer of material, resources, equipment, and staff to include dates and placement. Although sorting, packing, and discarding items accumulated over time is stressful and certainly not pleasant, it is necessary for us to make room for

Hackett

lived in Madrid and Barcelona, Spain, and Aviano, Italy, before working in Germany with the Air Force as a nurse anesthetist. While stationed in Germany he managed to cover most of the “hot spots” on the continent.

Fortunately for our students, Mr. Hackett brought his worldly experience to the classroom, where he has been teaching in various iterations and locations with DJJ for the past 29 years. Mr. Hackett says, with some sagacity, that he chose to teach at Beaumont because he “thought it would be interesting.”

Now, as he and the rest of us are preparing to move to Bon Air, we would all like to know more about him. For example, what is the secret to his longevity? How has he consistently been one of the very best teachers in our school? I mainly teach math, which you can do with a pencil and paper. English is pretty much the same way. Even history can be done mainly through lectures and notes, if absolutely necessary. But how do you teach the sciences with nothing but your talent – no scientific supplies, no equipment?

But that’s what we all do, I hear you say. Don’t get me wrong, you all have talent. But consider: Art instructor Meghan Hamm has paints, canvases and art supplies. Quilting instructor Roy Mitchell has material and machines worth thousands of dollars at his disposal. Hackett has Hackett, an occasional PowerPoint and lots of paper. I don’t know about you, but when I was in school (and I’m the oldest teacher here) I had a full set of chemicals, test tubes, Bunsen burners, flasks, samples, and a fully equipped lab for biology, chemistry and earth science. A lab for each

everyone at one location. We share information at faculty meetings and during dedicated packing work days while onsite. We encourage building level discussions and include “downsizing” as a standing talking point on our administrative meeting agenda.

It is also important to cultivate relationships externally. There is DJJ Education Unit representation on numerous local and state organizations. Information from these entities is shared through e-mail, faculty meetings, leadership meetings, and in smaller training sessions. We are strong partners with VDOE, Virginia Association of School Superintendents (VASS), Center for Educational Excellence in Alternative Settings (CEEAS), and other groups that positively guide our practice.

Developing and maintaining effective communication both internally and externally takes time and effort. It is our hope, and part of our Strategic Plan, that we are fostering an environment that promotes conversations.



Hackett employs a tried and true teaching tool: A piece of paper. one, mind you – not one for all three.

As an inclusion teacher at Beaumont, I’ve spent much of the past 10 years in Mr. Hackett’s various science classes. Basically, he never stops. He is on his feet for the entire period, teaching, checking, presenting, cajoling, joking, assessing, and repeating, repeating and repeating. He is very difficult to sidetrack. He has some problematic students like the rest of us, but he will work with them at any time for whatever the need might be. He knows all the kids, does their secret handshake, and is always talking to them in and out of class. The students may not all like him (very rare), but they all know that Mr. Hackett teaches... all of the time.

For Mr. Hackett, success as a DJJ teacher seems to involve dogged determination, a fair amount of intelligence, an understanding of our students, and the sports page on an occasional Friday after work. Not a bad combination, but rare nevertheless.