

**PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS**  
**BRIDGE TO EXCELLENCE MASTER PLAN STAKEHOLDER MEETING**

**DISTRICT 5 INPUT**

*June 18, 2009*

**BACKGROUND**

The Superintendent of Schools and Board of Education of Prince George's County Public Schools (PGCPS) are committed to graduating students "college and workforce ready". Work has been initiated to develop a plan for secondary school reform. A series of stakeholder meetings were held to elicit input from Prince George's County stakeholders about what college and workforce readiness means. One hundred seventy stakeholders attended the District 5 meeting. Stakeholders included administrators, teachers, parents, civic and business leaders, and representatives from local colleges and universities. This input will guide the system's work in secondary school reform.

**QUESTIONS**

Stakeholders were randomly assigned to discussion groups and engaged in a dialogue focusing on each of the following questions:

- What are the six most important skills that PGCPS students should have upon graduation?
- What four changes should PGCPS make to better prepare students for college and the workplace?

**RESULTS**

***What are the six most important skills that PGCPS students should have upon graduation?***

The stakeholders concluded that PGCPS should create a learning environment that fosters and promotes high level performance for college and the workplace. The six most important skills noted from the nine small group discussions are:

- analytical and critical thinking skills;
- opportunities to develop strong oral and written communication skills;
- new ways to support the development of student social skills;
- challenging strategies to develop strong reading comprehension skills;
- innovation and authentic experiences to develop mathematical skills; and
- technology skills.

### TOP 2 RESPONSES

The two responses most frequently identified by stakeholders as skills students need upon graduation were analytical and critical thinking skills and strong written and oral communication skills.

### ***What four changes should PGCPS make to better prepare students for college and the workplace?***

After much discussion from the stakeholders in large and small groups, the most noted four recommendations for the district to consider in secondary education reform are:

- Provide all students with more rigorous curriculum, starting in elementary school;
- Retrain teachers/secure highly qualified teachers;
- Expect all teachers to teach reading, writing and mathematics; and
- Raise academic and social expectations for all students.

### TOP 2 RESPONSES

Creating learning environments focusing on developing strong readers, writers, and mathematics and retraining teachers with content knowledge that fosters the development of higher level thinking were recommendations recorded in more groups than any other responses.

### SUMMARY

PGCPS gained invaluable input from District 5 stakeholders regarding “college and workforce readiness.” Overwhelming, the stakeholders indicated that the key to all students learning is ensuring that there is a highly effective teacher in every classroom. This was a common thread that permeated all discussions.

Other areas of focus identified by the stakeholders were: increased university/college/business visits for field opportunities and job shadowing; communications (speaking, writing); financial literacy; study and time management; high expectations for every student that match the skills and knowledge needed to succeed in college and workplace; and all teachers incorporating basic skill instruction (reading, math, writing) into their instructional programs. Stakeholders felt that the basic skills are the foundation of all learning, and nothing is as important as reading. They strongly encouraged the system to stop its practice of “teaching to the test”.

Stakeholders indicated that the social and emotional development of students is a major issue system-wide for classroom teachers. From this discussion, it was recommended that the district work closely with parents to institute a partnership to address this critical issue (interpersonal/social skills).

Finally, stakeholders suggested that the system look at eliminating practices that foster low achievement (unequal funding, low expectations, ineffective/inexperienced teachers, and blaming) and replace them with 21<sup>st</sup> century proven strategies and practices.