MARYLAND STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Preparing World-Class Students

Bernard J. Sadusky, Ed.D.
Interim State Superintendent of Schools

200 West Baltimore Street • Baltimore, MD 21201 • 410-767-0100 • 410-333-6442 TTY/TDD • MarylandPublicSchools.org

TO: Members of the State Board of Education

FROM: Bernard J. Sadusky, Ed.D.

DATE: December 6, 2011

SUBJECT: 2011-2012 National Title I Distinguished Schools Program

---

PURPOSE:

To recognize Pocomoke Elementary School and Sandalwood Elementary School as the 2011-2012 National Title I Distinguished Schools for Maryland.

BACKGROUND:

Title I, Part A is the largest federally funded education program which provides schools and school districts with high concentrations of students who are economically disadvantaged with funding to allow them to obtain supplemental resources to enhance their educational programs. At its core, Title I, Part A should be used to enhance reading, mathematics, and science programs for students who are not performing to state standards. Distinguished Title I schools go beyond what is mandated in the statute. Each year the National Association of State Title I Directors (NASTID) recognizes Title I Distinguished Schools from all fifty states and Puerto Rico, who have been selected for their outstanding results in one of two categories: (1) exceptional student performance for two or more consecutive years or (2) closing the achievement gap between student groups. Each state may nominate up to two of its Title I schools that have risen above obstacles of poverty to improve learning for its most vulnerable children. Two Maryland schools have been identified as 2011-2012 Title I Distinguished Schools.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Four hundred and twelve Title I schools participated in the 2010-2011 Maryland School Assessment (MSA). After comparing MSA data for the 2009-2010 and 2010-2011 school years, Pocomoke Elementary School in Worcester County scored highest in Category 1—exceptional student performance for two or more consecutive years, and Sandalwood Elementary School in Baltimore County scored highest in Category 2—closing the achievement gap between student groups. Attachment I contains a profile for each school which describes the focus areas, strategies, and key elements used by the two "distinguished schools" to improve academic achievement and the quality of teaching and learning. Both Elementary Schools will receive national recognition as National Title I Distinguished Schools at the Title I Conference in Seattle, Washington on January 21-24, 2012.

ACTION:

For information only and recognition by the State Board of Education.

Attachments

Pocomoke Elementary School
2119 Pocomoke Beltway
Pocomoke City, Maryland 21851

Mr. Christopher Todd Hall, Principal
Mr. Michael Browne, Assistant Principal
410-632-5130

Pocomoke Elementary School is located within a small rural town on the Eastern Shore of Maryland bordering the State of Virginia on the Delmarva Peninsula. Our Title 1 school, serving a diverse population of 402 students, represents a community of contrasts. Attendance areas include farms, residential subdivisions and subsidized housing within a nationally recognized "hot spot" zone of drug activity. Working with health, community and law enforcement services, stakeholders determine a significant percentage of families, 50% single parent, struggle with life-sustaining needs. Students begin their plight with poverty at birth reflective in a 66% free and reduced meals population. Our student body includes 44.5% White, 41.9% African American, 5.9% Hispanic, 5.9% two or more races and 1.8% Asian students.

School Wide Norms maintain high academic expectations across all grade levels and communicate a standard of optimal achievement for each student. Consistent vocabulary is utilized throughout the school to communicate expectations. Critical thinking strategies are modeled by teachers and reinforced with school wide reference charts depicting clarifying visual icons. Daily collaborative planning offers teachers opportunity to discuss classroom successes and challenges addressing instructional strategies, intervention techniques and enrichment activities.

Precision in Ongoing Data Collection, Analysis and Interpretation enables purposeful data-driven instructional decision-making celebrating student strengths and addressing needs of every student, every day. Our leadership team, as well as grade level teams, monitors disaggregated performance data resulting from the state assessment, county benchmarks, formative assessments and in-house data including student technology proficiency. General and special education teachers collaborate daily to differentiate instruction meeting the needs of modestly achieving and highly accelerated students. Our administrative team confers with each teacher to discuss individual student performance and progress made toward mastery of goals targeted in Individual Student Success Plans. The team also conducts periodic student work reviews examining working portfolios to monitor and discuss results of research-based instructional strategies.

Responsibility for Student Character Development, as well as the delivery of quality instruction, is owned by all school stakeholders and supported through our school's participation in the Positive Behavior and Support System (PBIS). This framework is the foundation upon which a consistent progressive discipline practice has been established, whereby adults and students feel respected and valued as a member of the school community. Our Second Step program proactively infuses behavioral lessons derived from monthly discipline reports indicating grade, location and type of behavioral infractions that may need to be addressed by our guidance counselor, classroom and special area teachers.

Sustained Research-Based Professional Development is derived from ongoing needs assessment analysis of student performance and teacher reflection. Ongoing teacher self reflection indicates areas of personal strength and weakness. In-house staff development addresses educator needs through training, implementation and reflection sessions to address instructional results. The Instructional Consultation Model is utilized as a colleague-facilitated teacher resource encouraging differentiated instructional options addressing modestly achieving

students. Our Building Leadership Team conducts ongoing training in the expectations of the Common Core State Standards to assure that our students will graduate globally competitive in college and career opportunities, ending our community's generational poverty.

Parent/Community Involvement Initiatives, instrumental in student success, are procured through continual dissemination of school-related information to all stakeholders both within and outside our school site. We inspire opportunities for parent/community participation in development of our Accreditation for Growth School Action Plan, combined special event/conference nights, volunteering and chaperoning. Each afternoon, community churches open doors to host and offer volunteers to assist our teachers with the Project Intervene remedial instruction and homework support program for modestly achieving students. Ongoing outreach into the community enables teachers to address the educational needs, personal and cultural preferences and circumstances of each student.

Greatest Contributing Factors include the instructional partnership between our administration and faculty which yields a collective sense of commitment and high academic expectations for every child. Both administration and teachers embrace a safe, nurturing creative environment where students and staff feel enthusiastic about learning and sharing ideas. Our school community embraces each child with a "*lead by example*" belief which inspired our school motto: ***Every Child Achieving, Every Adult Contributing.***

Sandalwood Elementary School
900 South Marlyn Ave.
Baltimore, Maryland 21221

Mr. Phillip Byers, Principal
Mrs. Margaret Roberts, Assistant Principal
410-887-0176

Sandalwood Elementary School is located in the Essex area of Southeast Baltimore County. We serve a diverse enrollment of 520 students. Our student population is 85% economically disadvantaged, 11% English Language Learners, 70% African American, 12% Hispanic, 12% Caucasian, 1% Asian, and 10% receive special education services. The teachers and staff at Sandalwood share a common school vision. This vision drives a common commitment that permeates all aspects of our school culture. Excellence in teaching and learning is possible because all staff is committed to improving and inspiring student achievement through rigorous, student- centered instruction, differentiated for our diverse population. We strive to continuously improve collaborative relationships with our School community.

Curriculum and Instruction
To facilitate the use of common language and expectations of the State Curriculum, we have designed a master schedule that promotes collaboration. Teachers meet weekly in content and vertical teams. Teachers align their understanding of content and their expectations of student work to the State Curriculum. Resource and Special Education teachers are able to best differentiate when collaborating with classroom teachers.

Opportunities for All Students to Achieve
Using data to identify individual students' strengths and needs has contributed to increased achievement. Teachers analyze short cycle, benchmark, and daily assessment data to monitor students' progress, and to evaluate the effectiveness of their instruction. We provide small group interventions throughout the day that is driven by specific student needs and monitor the effectiveness of the intervention. In-depth data analysis has implications for school-wide programs such as an explicit vocabulary program to address the diverse language needs of our students. Small group, differentiated math intervention remains flexible throughout the year so that we can provide individualized instruction to meet the varied needs of our student population.

Positive Behavior Management
Sandalwood Elementary strives to create an environment where students feel respected and where their voices will be heard. A school-wide Code of Conduct provides common expectations for behavior and a mechanism for providing positive reinforcement. Our character education program explicitly teaches students the Code of Conduct and creates a forum for teachers to build relationships with students. Weekly Classroom meetings as well as various outside Counseling Services provide outlets for regular student communication. After-school recreation programs include Scrabble Club, Boys and Girls intramural basketball program, and Dance Club which provide multiple opportunities for Staff to build positive relationships with our students.

Professional Development
The central theme of our school-wide professional development is increasing teacher's capacity to develop understanding of math and reading content so that students can become strategic readers and independent problem solvers. We believe that in-depth knowledge of content and pedagogy leads to rigorous and differentiated instruction. Analyzing student data and the degree of teacher mastery, enables us to provide job-embedded, individualized and small-group professional development. Providing continual feedback on instruction allows teachers to set individual goals and engage in reflective practice.

Participation with Parents, Families and Communities

Family involvement is a key factor in promoting student achievement. Our community is diverse, and often bilingual. Knowing our students and their families enables us to understand their needs and strengths. Through participation in the School Improvement Team, Curriculum Nights, and daily volunteering, we are able to share our goals and provide support for our families. In addition, families have an opportunity to participate in program planning that is the core of our yearly Parent Involvement Plan.

Greatest Contributing Factor

The Sandalwood Staff is united in its commitment working as a team to provide the most effective instructional program it can in order to meet the ever evolving needs of our school community. Math teachers providing small group intervention instruction can include ELL, Reading Specialists, Music, Art, and Physical Education teachers on any given day. By continuing to develop this commitment from parents, administrators, teachers, and students, we hope to continue to increase achievement for all students and prepare to meet the challenges of tomorrow.