

Part II

The Journey Continues

More than Just a Job...

Few things can help an individual more than to place responsibility on him, and to let him know that you trust him.

Booker T. Washington

I am an educator, not a politician. There... I have written it down for everyone to read! It is important to me that you understand my position from the start. When people approached me about running for the office of Superintendent, I was excited about the opportunity to effect change, but not enthusiastic about starting a campaign. Many friends encouraged me, and I began to see the possibility. I told these friends in the beginning, "My greatest fear is that I will be a candidate left standing all alone."

That has been an unfounded fear. The support and encouragement I have received from teachers, principals, support employees, community leaders and former students have created some of the most humbling moments of my life.

However, it was not until my colleagues organized an informal exploratory meeting that my fear was dispelled. On February 29, 2008, the group arranged for a meeting to be held at Asbury Place on Ninth Avenue. It was there that I began to understand fully just how much people believed in me. When I arrived, the meeting room was full of people. “Malcolm – Take A Leap of Faith” read a huge banner hung across the room. The place was packed... standing room only, and I was humbled. Gathered were dedicated and passionate teachers, school administrators, support staff, community leaders, parents and former students; these were people I had worked with over the years, and that night they were enthusiastically supporting me and urging me to run for Superintendent. For almost an hour, they came to the podium to tell why they believed I should run for the office of Superintendent of Schools. What a way to start a campaign! That event touched me deeply and has become a major highlight of my life.

That night reinforced many lessons my parents tried to instill in me as a child. If you treat people right, if you are always willing to lend a hand, and if you contribute without regard for

who receives the credit, there comes a time when all that you have paid forward yields great dividends. I never gave expecting to receive anything in return; however, in 2008, many of the people whose lives I have touched over my career have stepped forward to contribute to my campaign.

Throughout the campaign, the level of grass roots support has been amazing! I understand people are supporting me because they believe I can help them build a better school system. While this support is both humbling and empowering, it increases the sense of responsibility I feel.