

Transforming low-performing schools...

Those who say it cannot be done should not interrupt the person doing it.

Chinese Proverb

Low-performing schools are being transformed into higher-performing schools all across the country, and Escambia County has made some progress in this area; but we need to do more. Paramount to greater progress in changing low-performing schools to high-performing ones based on the Florida accountability system is a committed, consistent and concerted effort.

Improving low-performing schools can be accomplished if we adhere to the following guidelines:

1. Insuring that strong leaders who feel the ***urgent*** need to change are in charge,
2. Focusing on improving instruction by using data to set goals, changing instruction to meet the goals, monitoring progress and creating real time adjustments to classroom instruction,

3. Providing visible improvements early in the process to show the school community that progress is being made,
4. Assembling a committed staff that will remain with the school over time (including administrators, teachers, and support personnel).

In addition to these guidelines, school reform and restructuring is all about what teachers do in their classes. It is vital that restructuring efforts are carefully aligned with teaching and learning. True restructuring requires time for school staff and community leaders to internalize the revised system and gain the skills necessary to make the shift. Often, unrealistic timelines create situations where progress is more symbolic than effective.

As Superintendent, I will provide leadership which balances the need for results with the resources and time available. High standards of performance should be the norm throughout the school district. If we know what works and how to do it, why not implement those practices throughout all schools? Our current method does not provide a formal mechanism for sharing best practices.

While many educators share ideas with their colleagues at the school site, few are shared system-wide. Many good ideas to solve problems relating to academic achievement are generated at schools; however, they are not always shared with all, particularly, low-performing schools.