



MARTIN COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT

Where Learning Has No Boundaries



UPDATE FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

October 9, 2009

Over the past several months, I have been meeting with various individuals and community groups. A common topic of discussion is the tough economy and the impact it has had on many of our local families. Evidence of these difficult times can be found by reviewing the number of students qualifying for free or reduced priced meals. As of October 5th, district-wide, approximately 38 percent of students were utilizing this program, compared to approximately 34 percent last school year. There are likely many more children who could be receiving the benefits of this important program, but whose families have not yet submitted an application. This is why I want to emphasize that the free and reduced meals application can be submitted at any time during the school year. If a family's application has previously been denied, but now their economic status has changed, they are able to resubmit their application. Only one application per family needs to be provided.

Parents can contact the district's Food and Nutritional Services Department to receive the application, or they can submit the application online by visiting <http://www.sbmc.org/departments/foodservice/index.php>. The district encourages any family that believes they may qualify to please take the time to apply.

Chief Executive Officer Leadership Program

This week, October 6th—10th, I attended the Chief Executive Officer Leadership Program, which was organized by the Florida Association of District School Superintendents. This conference provided valuable training for superintendents across the state on topics such as vision and goal setting, improved teaching and learning, as well as systems and human resource leadership components.

Florida Commissioner of Education, Dr. Eric Smith, also spoke about the new Florida Assessment for Instruction in Reading, which is commonly referred to as FAIR. The Commissioner acknowledged there have been some challenges on the state's end with the online testing portion of this required assessment, but he said he is confident these issues are being resolved. At the district level, we know that it has been difficult for many teachers to complete this testing process and we appreciate all of their efforts, as well as the efforts of our reading coaches and administrators.

FAIR is administered three times a year for students primarily in kindergarten through 10th grade. The first round of assessments must be completed by October 20th. So far, about 86 percent of students have completed or begun the test. This is a much higher percentage than the majority of other school districts, and this is due to the ongoing efforts of our instructional staff.

The purpose of FAIR is to provide our schools with more detailed information on how students are performing in reading and to identify specific areas of strengths and weaknesses. The FAIR data is then used to help individualize instruction for students.

School Visits

Now that the school year is well underway, members of the Executive Leadership (EL) team are conducting school visits. The goal of these visits is to increase communication between the schools and district offices. The EL team members will also serve as liaisons for the schools to provide additional support. Increasing two-way communication is one of my priorities, and it is my hope that this initiative will be beneficial for everyone involved.

In addition, there are some new department leaders in the district. Pamela Lannon is the new Director of Human Resources and Staff Development and Julian Angel, who has been with the district for a few months now, is the new Director of Facilities and Planning. In addition, David Ruiz has joined the district as the new Risk Manager. Each of these individuals brings a wealth of experience to their positions and I am confident they will be valuable additions to our district!

Thanks for all you do for our students and schools.

Sincerely,

**Nancy Kline, Superintendent
Martin County School District**