



FAIRFAX COUNTY
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Cluster V

8115 Gatehouse Road
Falls Church, Virginia 22042-1203

August 17, 2007

Stephen G. Barkley
6227 Lower Mountain Road
New Hope, PA 18938

Dear Steve,

On behalf of the Cluster V staff and administrators, my sincere thanks for helping us kick off the new school year in a very meaningful and upbeat manner! We all enjoyed your presentation "Building a Winning Hand – Cashing in Effort for Student Achievement". I especially appreciated your extra efforts to relate your message to our Ocean's Five casino theme. You were also a great "dealer"!

I have received numerous emails and comments from the Cluster V administrators – all sharing sentiments of appreciation for bringing inspiration, practical suggestions, and thoughts on student achievement. You definitely were a "Wow" and dealt us a "winning hand"!

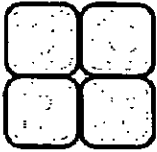
Steve, it was our pleasure to work with you on this kickoff event. I can't thank you enough for sharing your expertise with us and for driving the "extra miles" to get here for our morning event.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Betsy Fenske".

Betsy Fenske
Assistant Superintendent, Cluster V

BF/fe



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To Whom It May Concern:

It is with great pleasure that I recommend Performance Learning Systems. I have contracted with them for services over the past six years.

Performance Learning Systems has always provided high quality professional development for our teachers and administrators. Steve Barkley has taught a coaching and mentoring class for our district and always receives outstanding evaluations. We use his coaching course as a foundation to support our beginning teacher induction and mentoring programs for Orange County Public Schools.

I have observed the coaching training on several occasions and it is always delivered professionally and with the latest techniques available. Steve adjusts easily to his audience and always keeps their attention throughout.

Performance Learning Systems coaching and mentoring course would be an asset to any district, and I am happy to give them my wholehearted endorsement.

Sincerely,

Nora Gledich
Director of Leadership Development
Orange County Public Schools

PRO PRINCIPAL

Incorporating School Principal's Legal Alert

Principals sharing school management strategies

VOLUME 4, ISSUE 2

MARCH 2008

LEGAL SPOTLIGHT

YOU BE THE JUDGE

Can a school prohibit a student club from promoting a Web site containing hyperlinks to graphically violent films? **Page 10**

FIRST AMENDMENT

A principal didn't violate a student's free speech rights when she stopped him from selling ornaments with a religious message at a school-sponsored mock marketplace, because she had 'legitimate pedagogical concerns.' **Page 11**

RETALIATION

A former principal failed to establish that he was terminated because he challenged the district's alleged mismanagement and improper use of NCLB funds. **Page 11**

LIABILITY

A principal was not deliberately indifferent to a student's sexual abuse, because her response, including investigating the complaints and reporting them to school officials and police, was reasonable. **Page 12**

COVER STORY

Try peer coaching to ramp up faculty collaboration

Principals can break down the barriers of teacher isolation with an innovative peer coaching program. Peer coaching results in increased teacher collaboration, stronger classroom lessons, and ultimately, higher student achievement. "[Teachers] don't learn as much from articles and conferences as they do from interactions at school," said Tom Higgins, principal of Walton High School in Marietta, Ga. Three years ago, his school enlisted the help of a peer coaching expert, relying on the school's strong history of faculty collaboration to pave the way. Find out how peer coaching can make a difference in your school — and in your teachers. **Full story, page 3.**

Measuring success

A three-step process can help you assess the effectiveness of your peer coaching program. See **page 3.**

HIGHLIGHTS

Revitalize school image within your community

Principals are the role models for creating a positive image. Find out how your communication style and actions can influence how your school is perceived. **Page 4**

Hit the ground running when moving to new school

If you have ever changed schools, you are familiar with the many pitfalls. Know how to minimize disruptions in the learning process when you take the helm at a new school. **Page 5**

Title I high school focus falls short in Bush FY '09 budget

President Bush's 2009 budget proposal failed to incorporate NASSP's request for separate Title I funding streams for secondary, middle and elementary schools to better target dollars and prevent competition among school levels. **Page 6**

Diverse learners strengthen Blue Ribbon middle school

Faced with an increasing special and diverse school population, Star Principal Denise Jacobs implemented innovative professional development activities to prepare her staff to meet the challenges. **Page 7**

Use peer coaching to spark collaboration, improvement

Tom Higgins, principal of Walton High School in Marietta, Ga., believes that teachers learn best from other teachers. "They don't learn as much from articles and conferences as they do from interactions at school," he said.

Key points

- Peer-to-peer instruction resonates with teachers.
- Start with small but enthusiastic group of teachers.
- Establish benchmarks to assess success. ■

Three years ago, putting theory into practice, Higgins started a peer coaching program at Walton High School. He contacted a peer coaching expert, who trained a small group of teachers;

these teachers, in turn, trained their peers.

Faculty members now observe one another's classes and critique their colleagues' performances.

"The [peer coaching] model gives teachers the opportunity to play a role in each other's growth," said Steve Barkley, executive vice president of Performance Learning Systems in New Hope, Pa., who started the process rolling at Walton High School. "While the peer coach is in the classroom, she has the opportunity to learn other things by watching [the teacher] at work."

Higgins has the following suggestions for principals considering peer coaching programs at their schools:

- **Start small.** Strive for acceptance before expanding the program. "We started with a small group who raved about the program," Higgins said. "Then we gradually expanded it based on teacher feedback."

Forcing teachers to commit to the untested project may be an exercise in frustration. "They may comply at first, but you're not going to get the results you

Walk before you run

You won't be able to integrate peer coaching into your school culture overnight. Peer coach Steve Barkley, executive vice president of Performance Learning Systems in New Hope, Pa., said it typically takes three years from the time the program is implemented to the point at which the school becomes self-sufficient.

During the first year, an outside consultant generally trains the initial cohort. In the second year, more teachers are brought into the program by the consultant. After that point, the teachers are in a position to train their peers.

"By the third year, the school is doing it on its own with some coaching and support," Barkley said. ■

Proving worth of peer coaching

Critics contend it is often difficult to measure the results of a peer coaching program, since it does not directly impact student achievement. But peer coach Steve Barkley, executive vice president of Performance Learning Systems in New Hope, Pa., said results can be measured in three steps:

1. **Change in instruction.** Has the coaching resulted in teachers making changes in their classrooms?

2. **Change in student behavior.** Have students' attitudes toward learning improved as a result of the change in instruction?

3. **Change in student achievement.** Have test scores risen? Ultimately, that's the end product that educators are looking for.

In addition, peer coaching success can be measured by faculty engagement.

"Invariably, a lot of the improvement in education is done by the 25 percent of the staff who embrace change," said Tom Higgins, principal of Walton High School in Marietta, Ga. "Our goal is to go beyond 25 percent."

Nearly two-thirds of the teachers at Walton participated in the peer coaching program last semester. "That indicates that we're reaching a critical mass, and it will soon become a normative part of the school environment," Higgins said. ■

want out of the innovation," Higgins said. Start small with people who are interested in improvement. This may make it slower to achieve the desired results, "but if you start big, you'll never make any progress at all," Higgins said.

- **Build on your strengths.** You are going to see faster results if you maximize what you do best, Higgins said. "We've prided ourselves on interaction among teachers," he said.

Walton built the program to enhance teacher collaboration, which had traditionally been a strong suit of the school. The school used the interaction to provide a structure for improved instruction.

It's easy to fall into the trap of doing things by yourself, rather than trying to work with others to bring about improvements, Higgins said. Teachers may see themselves as being in business for themselves because they often work in isolation from others. But "isolation is the enemy of improvement," he said, and peer coaching cuts through the isolation and offers solutions.

For more information, e-mail Tom Higgins at tom.higgins@cobbk12.org and Steve Barkley at sbarkley@plsweb.com. ■