School Turnaround Utilizing Common Core Standards and Creating Positive School Culture

Montgomery County Schools, Kentucky

Presented by:
Dr. Joshua E. Powell, Superintendent
Lisa E. Stone, Director of School Improvement

Joshua E. Powell, Ph.D.

Joshua E. Powell is in his seventh year as a superintendent in Kentucky. Powell holds a B.A. from Berea College, a M.A. in Clinical Psychology from Western Kentucky University, and a Ph.D. from the University of Louisville.

Having led three low-performing districts to the highest student achievement gains in Kentucky, Josh Powell has demonstrated proven turnaround success—not only in schools, but entire districts.

Beginning his administrative career at Cloverport Independent, Powell led the district with an academic ranking of 165 out of 174 to a ranking of 10 in just three years. In only three years at Union County Public School, he led the district from a ranking of 161 to 52. Powell recently began his third superintendent position with the Montgomery County School District and replicated his turnaround efforts, as the district climbed from 132 to 47 after the first year.

Powell has received many accolades, including being named the KASA Administrator of the Year in 2007 and 2009 and the 2010 Berea College Young Alumnus of the Year. The districts in which Powell has been employed have received honors from KSA, NSBA, KASC, and the Kentucky Education Association (KEA).

Powell is known to be well versed in turning around schools and districts and has served on panels, presented at numerous state and national conferences and is regularly invited to assist various school districts and governmental entities.

With an unparalleled passion for student achievement, Powell greatly desires improvement for all schools. As a major advocate for public education and a proud Kentuckian, Powell hopes to influence all of Kentucky’s public schools to a nationally competitive standing.
Lisa E. Stone

Lisa E. Stone has over 32 years experience in the field of education. Stone holds a B.A. in Elementary Education from the University of Kentucky, a M.A. in Elementary Education from Eastern Kentucky University, a Rank I in Educational Leadership from Eastern Kentucky University, and is currently pursuing a doctoral degree from the University of the Cumberlands.

As principal for three schools, school improvement consultant for the Kentucky Association of School Councils, and district-level administrator in Fayette and Montgomery Counties, Stone has proven accomplishments as an educational leader who embraces academic success for every student.

With vast experience in the areas of curriculum, instruction, and assessment, Stone has demonstrated achievement as a turnaround agent, as well as an educator who can lead high-performing schools to exemplary levels. Every school or district she has served has shown significant academic gains. As Director of School Improvement in Montgomery County, Stone led the charge to make the highest academic gains in Kentucky. During the first year, 2011-2012, Montgomery rose from a state ranking of 132/174 to 47/174.

Stone has a passion for educating all children and understands the essential role educators play in students’ success. She believes in and supports the public education system. According to Stone, she is honored to serve the students of Montgomery County and views her work to be critical to promoting public education throughout the Commonwealth of Kentucky.

Vision and Mission

**Vision:** To lead all of Kentucky’s children by achieving top ten in everything we do.

**Mission:** To serve as a model by creating and sustaining a top-notch, comprehensive, educational program that serves to promote public schools as the best option for our children and future.
Values/Beliefs
Establish the Culture

• We believe that all children can learn at high levels
• Public education has the potential to be very successful
• MoCo has unlimited and unprecedented potential and, if managed and led appropriately, is able to be a model for the nation
• Employee culture and civility is significantly related to the performance of the district and each school
• Students are profoundly impacted by rigor, relevance, and relationships

• Empowering educators is crucial to the improvement of public education
• Maintaining the best educators in a school district is vital
• Empowered educators must be held accountable for working with our most precious commodity, and leadership, at all levels, must foster this belief
• Being student-centered is key to achieving optimal results
• MoCo has the resources to be among the national elite
• Parents and students are the customers of the MoCo school district; success is linked to customer satisfaction
• Parent involvement is essential for high performance
• We do not rely on excuses. Parents, socioeconomic status, funding, etc., are not related to school and district performance
• Organizational management and leadership of a school district is dependent upon: creating and sustaining a mindset of excellence in education, assessing, through reliable and valid data, and making decisions and developing plans, in accordance with data results

• School leadership and board member leadership must be visionary
• Leaders must understand and accept their respective roles in creating and sustaining a future for our children
• Staff and leadership development must be a high priority
Teach the Common Core

• Identify standard
• Establish the essential question
• Write the summative or common unit assessment
• Identify daily student-friendly learning targets
• Plan the instructional sequence
• Develop daily formative assessments or checks for learning

Implement Formative Assessment

• We measure everything and compare ourselves only to top ten schools and districts.
• Our comprehensive assessment plan includes cumulative interim assessments, common unit assessments, and daily formative assessments called checks for learning.
• All assessments are an integral part of and drive instruction.
• Every month, state, interim, or common assessment data are reported publicly in the board meeting.
Empower and Support Teachers

- Teachers drive the work of district-level staff
- Teachers are involved in every initiative – TEAM KIDS, Race to the Top Grant, Districts of Innovation, Horizontal Planning, Professional Learning Communities, and Professional Development

Historic Academic Gains in Turnaround Year One
Historic Academic Growth – 2012 – Year One Turnaround

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<td>182/227</td>
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<td>19%</td>
<td>185/230</td>
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<td>97/230</td>
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Montgomery County Percentile Rankings

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Why all the gains?

- The expectations of Kentucky’s public schools, including Montgomery County, were very low.
- Our culture shifted to one of high expectations for everything we do.
- School and teacher support was provided to put action behind high expectations.
- Amazingly, schools and districts have the resources and potential to perform at high levels.
- Leadership and structures account for 90% of success or failures. – Edwards Deming
  - Principal
  - Superintendent
  - SBDM Councils
  - School Boards
- Emphasis is on accountability and empowerment.
- Student achievement became the major focus of the district, which is rare in most public schools.
- A school district can only be as good as the community allows.
- Some of the community demanded improvement – school district will be among the elite when all demand it.
- Empowered educators were responsible for the academic gains. -- When the appropriate structures are in place, educators have optimal teaching conditions.

Conclusion

- Demand excellence in education
- Embrace accountability and competition
- Embrace the vision to lead all of Kentucky by achieving Top Ten in everything we do
- Understand that test scores are not everything, but they are, in fact, related to everything
- Rely on data & facts -- not hearsay, gossip, or rumors
- Believe that all kids can learn at high levels
- Significant progress was made in only a year -- imagine the potential.