

Children First!

News & Information from Metro Nashville Public Schools

Jan. 10, 2007

While Metro Schools has routinely used a strategic plan to map out a path for successful schools, the newest version for 2007-2014 will be developed this year with an unprecedented effort to include community voices.

The process began late last year, with the selection of a 20-member Steering Committee that represented all segments of our city. With the committee's approval, The Cambridge Group has now been selected to facilitate the development of the plan. Funding for the Group, which has nationally recognized expertise in the area of strategic planning, was donated to the district.

Later this month, another diverse group of 35 members will meet to establish such keystones of the plan as the district's beliefs, mission, critical issues and objectives. That's when the most massive phase of community involvement begins, because the district is looking to recruit more than 500 volunteers to help develop action plans to achieve the five to seven most important goals of the district.

We expect to have a strategic plan section posted next week on the district's website at www.mnps.org. You'll also get regular updates in Children First! on the progress of the plan until its completion this summer, along with opportunities to volunteer or to submit your ideas to an Action Team. Please stay tuned – MNPS is excited to involve our community in education – the most important thing our city does.

Jones Paideia Elementary School celebrates opening of renovated building

Jones Paideia Elementary School will be celebrating its re-opening following a \$4 million, 26,000-square-foot addition and renovation of the original building. The ceremony is set for Thursday, Jan. 11 at 10:00 a.m. at Jones, which re-opened Jan. 8. Remarks at the dedication ceremony will be provided by Mayor Bill Purcell; Vice Mayor Howard Gentry; Director of Schools Dr. Pedro Garcia; School Board Chair Marsha Warden and Pam Greer, principal of Jones Paideia Elementary.

Metro teacher is best in nation

Christian Sawyer, a Social Studies and English teacher at Hillsboro High School, has been named National Secondary Social Studies Teacher of the Year for 2006 by the National Council for the Social Studies.

The award is presented to teachers who demonstrate exceptional abilities, including: developing or using instructional materials creatively and effectively; incorporating

innovative instructional strategies; demonstrating the ability to foster a spirit of inquiry; and encouraging the development of democratic beliefs, values, and skills needed to become effective citizens.

We're delighted to have one of the nation's best teachers in an MNPS classroom!

Antioch High students' art creations displayed at Frist Center

A number of prints by 15 Antioch High School student artists will be featured January 12-May 6, 2007 at the Frist Center for the Visual Arts. The Center will host an opening reception for the artists and guests Friday, Jan. 12, from 5-7 p.m. in the Rechter Community Room. The Contemporary Cultures exhibit will include prints created by Antioch students who participated in an after-school program organized by the Frist Center.

Microsoft settlement nets money for Metro Schools technology

A statewide, unlawful trade practices settlement with software giant Microsoft means Metro Schools will receive vouchers worth \$1.2 million to pay for Windows, Office and encyclopedia software.

Our administrators are just beginning to sort through the details of the arrangement announced last month by the State Department of Education, but the opportunity will get top priority before the April 30 deadline. Lance Lott, who leads the technology department for the district, was especially pleased the offer comes just as we're beginning a new five-year plan to expand computer access for students and teachers. Every dollar from the settlement, he said, will replace local tax money as the district funds the ambitious program.

Metro Schools on the national scene

Board of Education member George Thompson's greetings to the national conference of the Council of the Great City Schools are reprinted in the latest issue of "Urban Educator" at www.cgcs.org.

As this year's chairman of the Council, Thompson's remarks focused on the mission and challenges facing 66 of the country's largest school districts. He also represented the district during a panel discussion on "The Future of Urban Education," moderated by veteran journalist Bill Moyers. During the discussion, Thompson looked ahead to the professional uncertainty facing our students of today. "In the next 10 years, 80 percent of the jobs that will come into existence don't exist now," he said.