



Steve Pauley
Superintendent

Lincoln County Schools

Patricia Lucas
Assistant Superintendent

May 24, 2010

To: Proposal Committee

I am writing this letter in support of Learning-Focused. Lincoln County Schools began working with Learning-Focused during the 2007/08 school year. We found that using the Learning-Focused Model has strengthened our standards-based curriculum and given teachers a strong focus in planning and implementing high quality lessons. The company has been extremely accommodating in customizing training based on our needs and having a large variety of solutions to meet our priorities.

Since working with Learning-Focused we have experienced achievement growth in the areas of mathematics and reading/language arts at all three programmatic levels (elementary, middle, and high school). This growth can be directly attributed to the use of research-based strategies in our classrooms that are becoming consistent and pervasive as a result of Learning-Focused. Moreover, the quality of instruction in our classrooms has increased district-wide. Additionally, Learning-Focused has positively impacted the culture of our schools. Students are now more engaged in learning. As a result of being actively engaged in learning, attendance has increased and behavior problems have decreased district-wide.

We have found Learning-Focused associates to be professional and knowledgeable, and they have gone above and beyond in their willingness to have teachers contact them whenever they have questions, concerns, or challenges. This has been one quality of Learning-Focused that is not often seen in companies providing professional development. Learning-Focused has been a much needed and welcome addition to our school district. Our district's improvement in teaching and learning has occurred as a result of the time, effort, and commitment of the Learning-Focused consultants. The consultants have become part of our school district's family and an integral part of our success.

I would encourage you to strongly consider using Learning-Focused for your professional development needs and as a means of raising student achievement in your school district.

Sincerely,

Jeff Mickiff

Director of Federal Programs
Lincoln County Schools

BUENA REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

Phone (856) 697-0800

Walter W. Whitaker, Jr.
Superintendent of Schools

Administrative Office: 914 Main Avenue, Richland, New Jersey 08350
Mailing Address: P.O. Box 309, Buena, New Jersey 08310
Web site: www.buena.k12.nj.us

Fax (856) 697-4963

Thomas J. Kearney
Business Administrator/
Board Secretary

May 20, 2010

I am writing this letter in support of Learning-Focused. The Buena Regional Middle School (Formerly the John P. Cleary Middle School) had been flagged as a School In Need of Improvement (SINI) by the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) based on poor performance on our state assessments and the challenge of meeting Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) as defined by No Child Left Behind legislation. In the eight years that these assessments had existed, this school had failed consistently. Additionally the District is considered "At Risk" because of the level of poverty found within the community.

We began working with Learning-Focused in 2008. As of the 2010 school year we are no longer a SINI. The school has either met "Safe Harbor", AYP and/or exceeded state averages for each sub-group tested for the past two consecutive years. In fact the Buena Regional Middle School is one of nine schools in the state presenting at the NJDOE Effective Practice Conference Showcase in June. Both of these outcomes have been a direct outgrowth of the Learning Focused experiences by staff and engaging students with research based "best practices", employing a model for inclusion supported by acceleration labs and supporting professional growth with the walk thru and peer coaching elements supported by Learning- Focused experiences.

Learning-Focused associates were professional, knowledgeable, and very well received by our staff. Instructors always walk away from these venues with practical knowledge that can be applied in the classroom immediately. A bi-product of each of these workshops has always been positive energy which has manifested itself in teachers focusing on learning and improvement of opportunity for students.

Please call upon me so that I may offer additional support.



Carol L. Lane, Superintendent

Jerry Hicks, Chairman | Robin McInvale, Vice-Chair | Joseph Alexander | Leon Coverson | Robert Hawk



May 24, 2010

Implementing the Learning Focused Schools Project K-12 in Meriwether County is an on-going process, a work in progress, but as we entered our fourth year in 2004-05 we began realizing the tremendous benefits of *teaching with a focus on increasing student learning*. Our students live in rural, low socio-economic communities, our schools have high populations of minority and special education students, and our students come to us with great challenges in language and vocabulary development. Since we began designing our curriculum and teaching within the standards-based framework of learning focused instructional strategies, we have seen our students make tremendous gains in learning as evidenced by their performance on state-mandated assessments. We share a common language for learning, and we are becoming more and more professional, reflective practitioners of both the art and the science of teaching. Our goal has changed, from aiming to teach what is required, to ensuring that **all** students learn to the greatest possible degree and at the highest possible level. Learning, not teaching, is the issue, and LFS has helped us effectively change our focus. Now, in our ninth year of implementation, Meriwether County Schools can point to the following benefits of its system wide focus on learning focused instructional strategies.

- ☞ An increase in student achievement, especially in reading, language arts, and mathematics
- ☞ An increase in student engagement and a corresponding decrease in discipline referrals in our schools
- ☞ An increase in higher level thinking questions and tasks in our classrooms, providing increasing rigor and higher expectations for our students
- ☞ An increase in the use of scientific research-based instructional strategies in all classrooms
- ☞ An increase in the consistent and pervasive use of balanced assessment to inform scaffolding and differentiation

The on-going coaching and training, which supported and followed-up the initial instructional strategies training, has included more narrowly focused workshops targeting specific areas of the learning process, repeated instructional strategies training when needed, daily support by instructional lead teachers and instructionally-focused assistant principals, and county-level support by a learning-focused trainer/coordinator. Much of this follow-up work has taken the form of collaborative planning for instruction by teaching teams and coaching of individual teachers and teaching teams by the instructional lead teachers and the county-level support persons. At various times during the last nine years, Learning Focused associates have provided our system with expert, professional, and effective guidance and support.

Martha Ann Todd

Assistant Superintendent of School Improvement

2100 Gaston Street, P.O. Box 70 | Greenville, GA 30222 | Phone 706.672.4297 | Fax 706.672.1618 | www.meriwether.k12.ga.us

Meriwether County School District is committed to do whatever it takes for all students to aim high, achieve GRADUATE, and succeed.

Cherokee County School District

P.O. Box 769
Canton, Georgia 30169
Phone 770-479-1871 – Fax 770-479-1236

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DR. FRANK R. PETRUZIELLO
SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

May 25, 2010

To Whom It May Concern:

The Cherokee County School District (CCSD) recommends Learning Focused Schools (LFS) comprehensive continuous school improvement model be considered as a service provider for Race to the Top Schools in Tennessee. Cherokee County School District has utilized consistent and pervasive effective instructional strategies for increased student academic achievement, which are hallmarks of the LFS model, as the vehicle to implement Georgia Performance Standards. CCSD partnered with LFS to provide staff training, materials and facilitation of school visits, making this implementation process highly successful.

The Cherokee County School District is the 22nd fastest growing county in the nation with a total student enrollment over 38,000 students. The School District is comprised of 40 schools, which include 22 elementary schools, an intermediate center, seven middle schools, six high schools, an alternative school, a Head Start Center, and an evening school. More than 28% of students are eligible for free/reduced meal benefits and approximately 23% are minority.

To provide all students with high quality teachers with extensive teacher preparation, classroom experience, and an in-depth knowledge of the subjects they teach is a continuous endeavor. Since 2004, LFS training and monitoring has been a core training and lesson planning model for certified employees. The Office of Educational Programs, Student Support and Professional Development has, in partnership with Learning-Focused, completed training for:

- Over 1,000 certified staff members
- 6 Innovation Zones
- 24 Schools (K-12)
- 52 in-district certified trainers
- All new certified staff member receive training prior to beginning school via Camp Cherokee

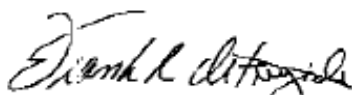
Through comprehensive implementation of the LFS model, a culture of effective instructional strategies used consistently and pervasively across the School District, combined with individual school improvement initiatives and monitoring, provided a powerful model for instituting the Georgia Performance Standards in all core content areas. Student academic achievement scores have progressively increased. Specifically in 2009:

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- Georgia Criterion Referenced Competency test (GCRCT) scores for grades 3, 5, and 8 in Reading and Math across the School District were significantly higher than State scores.
- In all of the GCRCT subtest areas, CCSD had a higher percentage of students exceeding or meeting the standards than the State from 3 to 19 percentage points.
- The percentage of students scoring in the highest category of exceeding the standards was from 5 to 17 percentage points higher than the State.
- Eighth grade math scores increased by 10%.
- Fifth grade math scores improved by 7%.
- In several schools, every student met the standards on certain subtests for particular grades.
- All five high schools rank in the top 25 high schools in Georgia as ranked by the Independent Georgia Policy foundation.
- All five high schools were recognized as “High Performing Schools” by the Governor and State School Superintendent under Georgia’s single statewide Accountability System.
- The 2008-2009 high school graduation rate was 80.7%.
- CCSD was one of only three Metro Atlanta districts to make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) last year under the Federal No Child Left Behind Act. This represents the third year in a row CCSD has made AYP.

LFS associates are professional, competent and accessible. Once contracted, the consultants have provided customized training, individual school planning, walk through and monitoring training, and conference opportunities in all participating CCSD schools. School improvement initiatives are grounded in LFS vocabulary and strategies.

Sincerely,



Dr. Frank R. Petruziello
Superintendent of Schools

CEC/PK/JM/sh

cc: Dr. Carla D. Cohen, Assistant Superintendent, Educational Programs, Student Support and Professional Development
Dr. Pat Kearns, Director, Academic Standards, Professional/Staff Development and Career Pathways
Jackie Miller, Supervisor, Professional/Staff Development

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