

## Harford County Public Schools



102 S. Hickory Avenue, Bel Air, Maryland 21014 ● Teri D. Kranefeld ● Manager of Communications  
office: 410-588-5203 ● cell: 443-752-2062 ● [teri.kranefeld@hcps.org](mailto:teri.kranefeld@hcps.org) ● [www.hcps.org](http://www.hcps.org) ● fax: 410-893-2478

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### Harford County Public Schools hosts Diversity Network series

The Superintendent's Cultural Proficiency Council, a group of diverse community leaders and parents who meet monthly and serve as advisors to the Superintendent of Harford County Public Schools Robert M. Tomback, kicked off its series of *Diversity Network* meetings on Saturday, March 13th at Aberdeen High School.

Nearly 100 community members, faith-based leaders, sorority/fraternity representatives, parents, administrators and teachers braved the elements on a rainy Saturday to engage in a meaningful dialogue in order to identify strategies which will positively impact student achievement.

This year, the Council is focusing on increasing communication, establishing relationships and building partnerships between community stakeholders and the school system with the goal of eliminating the achievement gap among all students. Based on trends in testing data, a special focus will be placed on eliminating the achievement gap for African American male students.

"We are appreciative of the herculean effort of our community members in partnering with us to effectively address an ongoing need in our school community," stated Superintendent Tomback. "Forging these key community partnerships will allow us to realize our goal of reaching every parent and every student to facilitate improved student achievement."

The Diversity Network meetings were organized to begin working toward the Council's goals. Community leaders recognized for their leadership and commitment to improving the community and lives of Harford County citizens were invited to become part of the *Diversity Network*.

Board President Mark Wolkow, Superintendent Tomback, Pastor Nathaniel Johnson and Cultural Proficiency Council Chair Joyce Byrd brought greetings to the group. In addition, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction Roger Plunkett shared data relating to the achievement gap in both reading and math within the Harford County student group populations. Mr. Plunkett challenged the community members present to focus on raising expectations, empowering youth and serving as heroes or role models for our students to emulate.

Following the data presentation, small group sessions allowed participants to share their views relating to barriers in engaging parents in the educational experience, as well as partnership opportunities to provide students with real-world application of their studies. All of the suggestions and concerns will be reviewed with the Cultural Proficiency Council to create recommendations for the Superintendent in moving forward with this initiative.

"The *Diversity Network* conference is the beginning of what we hope will be many opportunities to reach out to all of our stakeholders," said Mr. Plunkett.

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This meeting was the first of a three-part series. Additional meetings have been scheduled to follow-up on recommendations, concerns, and questions that grew out of the first meeting. The next meeting will be held on Tuesday, April 20th and the final meeting for this school year will be held on Tuesday, May 18th. Both meetings will be held from 6:30 – 8:30 p.m. at the Center for Educational Opportunity (CEO), 153 Paradise Road, Aberdeen.

In addition, the Superintendent’s Cultural Proficiency Council is recruiting new members. The next meeting of the Council will be held on Thursday, April 15th, 8:30 – 10:00 a.m., at the CEO.

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