

THE CHANGING FACE OF EDUCATION REQUIRES A CHANGE IN PRACTICE

“Life can only be understood backwards; but it must be lived forwards.”

Soren Kierkegaard

Public education is an age-old institution in America. In fact, the United States was the first nation to embrace the idea of free public education for all of its children. At this time, it was believed that all children should benefit from the experience of grammar school. However, a commonly held belief at this time, was that only a few would benefit from a high school education. The belief that all students could and should learn at high levels was not part of the belief system of the educators of the time, nor of the public. Intelligence was thought to be something you were born with, not something you acquired. This was an era of *Learning for the Few*.

Gradually, researchers began to establish that what happens in schools has a major impact on student achievement. This opened the door to a new era which held fast to the belief that *All Students Can Learn*. This then became a common rallying cry for public education.

With the No Child Left Behind legislation, we've seen a not-so-subtle shift to *All Students Must Learn*. Regardless of gender, ethnicity, economic status, language barriers, or special needs, all children must learn. This represents a huge shift from the thinking that originally shaped the institution of education. A shift in practice will also need to occur to address this directive successfully.

Teachers once worked within the isolation of their classroom, to perform their duties. They would review the state's standards and the district curriculum and then teach the concepts to the best of his or her ability. Following the instruction, an assessment will show those students who were able to master the concepts, as well as those who did not attain mastery. Now what? If the teacher takes additional time to continue teaching those children who have not yet mastered the concepts, the needs of the students who have learned the content are not being met. If the teacher moves on with new concepts, those struggling students are likely to fall further behind. This is a dilemma a teacher faces daily while working in isolation.

Meridian Joint School District No. 2 recognizes the value of collective intelligence that results when teachers are able to work together collaboratively to address the needs of each learner. When teachers have an opportunity to work in teams to design instruction, measure learner outcomes, and plan appropriate interventions we can reduce the limitations and increase student success.

We're committed to finding solutions that benefit the children in this district. We presently have committees, with representation from parents, administrators and teachers who are studying our need for teacher collaboration time during the school day and developing a plan to address this need. All committee actions are available for your review on the district's website at www.meridianschools.org under the parent section. We will keep our School Board informed of our efforts and hope to seek their approval of a plan for including collaboration time into our school day.