



STUDENT SUCCESS C.A.F.E.
SESSION WRAP UP



DECATUR COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT
Superintendent's Community Conversations
Jones-Wheat Elementary School
Jan.28, 2016

More than 200 family, school and community members joined Superintendent Dr. Fred Rayfield and the [Decatur School District C.A.F.E. Student Success Stakeholder Team](#) Thursday, Jan. 28 to discuss ways the community and the school district can partner in leading *all* Decatur students to graduate and successfully move on to college, technical school and other secondary options.

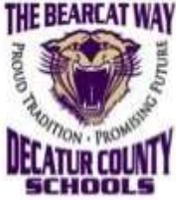
The C.A.F.E. team will meet to develop its 18-month action plan on Feb. 16 at 4 p.m. at Jones-Wheat Elementary School. Its next steps will be based on: information gathered at the Superintendent's Community Conversation; district wide achievement data; a recent teacher survey initiated by the C.A.F.E.; and the facilitated discussions at two earlier C.A.F.E. sessions.

"One in six children who are not reading proficiently in third grade for not graduate on time. It's time to act. Together, let's made a difference."

At the Community Conversation, along with a crowd-pleasing performance by the Friendship House Choir, Dr. Rayfield and several other administrators presented information, plans and challenges to boost achievement. Participants were invited to put comments on Graffiti poster boards on C.A.F.E. identified improvement issues, including graduation, absenteeism, school readiness, planning for post secondary options, and literacy.

About 16 C.A.F.E stakeholder members attended the meeting to listen to input and to share the work already underway to boost the graduation rate. The C.A.F.E. met twice as a full group with a facilitator - and also in individual committees - to review research and data and to share information from their many perspectives as they work to develop a community plan that will work in concert with the ongoing work by the school district.

Following the presentations, participants were invited to share a meal in the cafeteria and to continue discussing ideas and concerns.



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Some highlights included:

- Bainbridge High School Principal Tommy Howell explained how the graduation rate is continuing to increase and stands at 82 percent but pointed out that it needs to be 100 percent. In 2011, the district's graduation rate was 67.5 percent.
- Parent Mentor Joseph Randal acknowledged the daunting challenges families face but emphasized the importance of the community coming together with the school district to support students. He explained how the C.A.F.E operates and urged others to get involved in the work. He also partnered in a student success testimony by a member of the senior class, who also is a local football star. Some of his fellow teammates on the Bainbridge High School winning Bearcat football squad also attended.
- Meanwhile, Exceptional Education Director Catherine Gossett presented additional school data, in which the C.A.F.E. is reviewing, including the absentee rate, which showed 736 students missed more than 15 days during the 2014-2015 school year. She explained students are missing valuable instruction so there's an urgent need to find ways to get students to school everyday. Mrs. Gossett also explained the C.A.F.E.s concern for a push to increase the reading skills of young students. She said 85 percent of a child's brain develops before four years old. She said the C.A.F.E. is looking at school readiness as part of its action.
- Middle School Principal John Woodin also challenged the participants to get engaged and to ensure every student would and could succeed.

Dr. Rayfield presented the evening's keynote sharing with the group his own personal story of growing up in poverty conditions in Alabama and the difference an education has made for him. He said his grandfather only had a fourth grade education; his parents did not go to college and was expected to get a job. Yet, he worked hard in school and found a way to go to college and graduate school. He said there were champions for him along his journey.

He urged families, educators and community members to be champions for Decatur students so each one can reach his or her dreams. He added that educators couldn't do the job alone.

"We can't blame it on one another," he said. "We all have responsibilities. We are reaching out tonight for those have an interest to find solutions."

Dr. Rayfield added, "When students under perform - we lose as individuals and we lose as a community - because we lose the leadership capacity that is essential for the future of Decatur. All our future leaders are sitting in our classrooms. Let's not jeopardize our future. Everyone in this room and outside this room has a personal responsibility to this community!"

Dr. Rayfield stressed the need to act now and to keep up the level of urgency that the C.A.F.E. is promoting. He said the goal is for every student to graduate and move on to a career path. He added, "We will not be satisfied until every student graduates with a plan."



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Thank you to the C.A.F.E. committees for their work in preparing for the successful Community Conversation. A special thanks goes to Mrs. Sylena Wiggins for her outstanding leadership and tireless work to prepare and organize the meeting. Thank you also to Mr. Randall for his excellent outreach efforts.

C.A.F.E. Working Committees:

Logistics	Leader: Ms. Burke Members: Mrs. Wiggins, Mrs. McIntyre and Ms. Chavers
Campaign Branding	Leader: Mr. Kelley Members: Mrs. Gossett, Mrs. Guy, Mrs. Varner and Mrs. Whaley
Outreach	Leader: Mr. Randall Members: Mr. Brinson, Ms. Thomas, Ms. Moreno, Mr. Wooden

C.A.F.E. Members in Attendance at Community Conversation

Jimmy Adamson, Local Minister and Community Activist
Dennis Brinson, Decatur County Commissioner
Gina Burke, High School Lead Teacher
Alesia Brinson, Community Volunteer
Kevin Bruton, Parent and local Business Owner
Porche Chavers, Middle School Teacher
Kimberly Coleman, Ga Department of Labor
Michael Cox, Sheriff Deputy
Catherine Gossett, Exceptional Education Director
Tom Griffin, Bank Representative, Graduate of Decatur Schools
Cheryl Guy, Bainbridge Parent Involvement Coordinator
Tommy Howell, Cairo High School Principal
Joe Kelley, High School Math Teacher, Climax Councilman-elect
Marilyn Mason, VR Representative
Debbie McIntyre, Adult Education Bainbridge State College
Ale Moreno, Parent
Fred Rayfield, School District Superintendent
Joseph Randall, Parent Mentor
Lanika Thomas, Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor
Kathy Varner, Title I, Federal Programs Director
Elizabeth Whaley, Parent and Trainer – “Darkness to Light”
Sylena Wiggins, Exceptional Education Assistant Director
John Wooden, Bainbridge Middle School Principal

C.A.F.E. Members unable to Attend:

Andrew Diaz, GAP Counselor



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What's Next: The C.A.F.E. team plans to continue mapping current initiatives and resources so to better coordinate collaboration and communication and also to develop additional activities to meet the ultimate goal of preparing students for graduation and secondary possibilities. In particular, the stakeholders will discuss ways to support the effort to target 50 high school students with academic challenges under the FY16 State Systematic Improvement Plan. (SSIP) In addition, the C.A.F.E. will develop goals based on district wide school data, as well as information garnered thus far under SSIP. Based on C.A.F.E. discussion, the team particularly expects to work – along with the district - on increasing reading fluency and comprehension and decreasing the absentee rate. Finally, a campaign slogan and theme will be voted on at the meeting. Possible slogans include the following: Dream Big...Finish Strong; READ...Dream...Achieve; and READY...Set...Go!

C.A.F.E., standing for Circles of Adults Focusing on Education, is a statewide stakeholder model that brings together school, community and family members to collectively work to improve local student outcomes. The process was developed by the GA Department of Education with the support of the national IDEA Partnership and the US Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs. Respectfully submitted: Patricia Solomon, Facilitator, GaDOE