

**State of the School System Address  
November 19, 2008**

**By**

**Dr. Michael J. Martirano  
Superintendent  
St. Mary's County Public Schools**

Good afternoon.

First of all, I want to thank the Chamber of Commerce for coordinating this event. Additionally, I want to thank Jim Bacot of Lifestyle Design, Inc., Todd Morgan of Eagan McAllister Associates, and Vince and Cheri Whittles of Servpro for sponsoring this event. We are so grateful for their generosity.

Our school system has strengthened our partnership with the St. Mary's County Chamber of Commerce. We have partnered to conduct this event, the principal for the day program and a reading fluency program that involves volunteers from the business community.

The Chamber is a very effective group and I am pleased to be part of the Board of Directors as a Community Representative. I am able to work directly with an outstanding President, Mr. Bill Scarafia and an outstanding chairman, Mr. Tom Jarboe. Both individuals truly understand the role that a great public school system plays in the vitality, prosperity, and quality of life in our county. They have been so supportive of our efforts.

Before I begin, I want to acknowledge a few individuals in the audience. I am joined today with my Board of Education members:

Mr. William Mattingly, Chairman

Dr. Sal Raspa, Member

Ms. Mary Washington, Member

and newly elected Board of Education Member, Ms. Marilyn Crosby

Ms. Cathy Allen, Vice Chairman, Mr. Gary Kessler, Member, and Ms. Kate Rocheteau, Student Board Member are unable to join us today due to other commitments

(They are a GREAT Board and I am asking that you please give them a round of applause)

I would like to introduce my two division chiefs: Mr. Brad Clements our Chief Operating Officer and Ms. Linda Dudderar our Chief Academic Officer.

Also with me are members of my leadership team which I refer to as triple S-T. This stands for the Superintendent's School Support Team.

(SSST - please stand and let's give them a round of applause)

Also, I would like to recognize our PTA representatives, parents, teachers, principals and other school system employees.

(Please give them a round of applause)

Also, I would like to acknowledge our various elected officials. We enjoy a very productive and collaborative relationship with all of our elected officials.

Mr. Dick Myers representing Senator Barbara Mikulski

Delegate Johnny Wood

Commissioner Danny Raley and his wife Ann

Commissioner Tom Mattingly

Sheriff Tim Cameron

and

County Administrator, Mr. John Savich

(Please give them a big round of applause)

Additionally, in the audience are members of our Employee Associations

Liz Purcell-Leskinen, Uniserv Director

Wanda Twigg, EASMC President

Joe Shade, CEASMC President

We have established a very collaborative working relationship that benefits our 2,300 employees.

I am pleased with the turn out at this event. I understand that we have 210 plus individuals present and this is the largest turnout yet. I see so many of our partners in education in attendance. We have representatives from our local businesses, the Patuxent River Naval Air Station, the technology corridor, our local colleges, our volunteer agencies, our local government, our county library, St. Mary's Hospital, the NAACP, BECA, the Patuxent Partnership, and the Navy Alliance. I consider each and every one of you a partner. Every one of you must have a place at the table of the St. Mary's

County Public School System. Everyone plays a vital role in the success of our children and not acknowledging this would be remiss. I want to publicly thank each and everyone assembled in this room for what you do for our children each and every day. The school system cannot do it alone.

Many of you in attendance represent various businesses in our community. As you know, one of the first questions a perspective employee asks you is, “What is the quality of our public schools?”

The economic vitality of our community is critical to the success of our overall community. There is a true symbiotic relationship and the quality of our public schools play a critical role in the quality of life for our overall community.

As I prepared my presentation for today, I wanted to ensure that certain themes were conveyed. I want to emphasize collaboration, communications, community, and commitment.

The commitment and interest in public education in St. Mary’s County is palpable.

Recently, I stopped by Panera Bread on a Saturday afternoon. As I was waiting for my order, a very nice senior citizen was looking at me. She approached me and said, “How do I know you?” I said, “Well I am not sure, I live in Leonardtown and I…” Before I could finish the next word, she said, “You, you are the superintendent of schools; I have seen your picture in the paper and I read all the articles about our excellent school system.” Well, I was delighted to say the least and I said, “Thank you for your kind words.” Then the expression on her face changed, she got very serious and she touched me on the arm and she said, “Sir, your job is very important to our community and I just want you to know that we are praying for you everyday.”

With that I grabbed my sandwich, I rolled up into the fetal position and I crawled under a table to reflect on the gravity and the impact of her words. The business of educating all children is the business of everyone. It is hard and demanding yet rewarding and satisfying. Everyone plays a part.

Today is a bright and glorious day in St. Mary’s County. As your superintendent of schools, I am delighted to have the opportunity to deliver the 3rd Annual state of the school system address to citizens of St. Mary’s County. Today is an opportunity to revisit our purpose, to examine our focus, and affirm our directional path as we move our school system to a school system of greatness.

Ladies and Gentlemen, let me say for the record that the State of the St. Mary’s County Public School System is strong and vibrant. Today, I am here to proclaim that we are a High Performing School System.

(Let me repeat this statement)

We have outstanding teachers, principals, and staff, we have supportive parents, our Board of Education is second to none, our business and community partnerships are strong and we are inspired each day by our students.

It is about the kids. The work that we do every day benefits each one of our nearly 17,000 students.

As you listen today, keep the voices of our children alive and listen to all that is said from the vantage point of a child. All that we do, and all that we say is done on behalf of our children. Our children win each day in St. Mary's County Public Schools and we must continue to keep it that way.

We continue to take a very introspective look at our school system. We have been very analytical about where we have been. We realized that we needed to do business in a different way. We have broken through to the next level of greatness.

Our purpose as defined by our mission statement is uncompromising.

“Know the learner and the learning, expecting excellence in both....  
Accept no excuses...educating all with rigor, relevance, respect and positive relationships.”

Our focus is on each child. We make decisions about instruction that are based on the data.

We have developed an alignment system that leaves nothing to chance. Everything we do is intentional so we can ensure that all ships are sailing in the same direction.

Our purpose, our focus, and our direction are clearly plotted to ensure excellence and greatness for our students.

We know where we are going and how to get there and with a full throated intensity, we are working hard and being nice.

We believe that ALL Children Can and Will Learn

As a school system, we are enthusiastic about our work and we have great hope for the future.

Our successes are abundant and true. Our metrics are in and we have so much to be proud of; but, we recognize that we have work to do as well.

We have 26 schools

Nearly 17,000 students

73% are Caucasian  
20% are African America  
3% are Hispanic  
3% are Asian/Pacific Islander  
Less than 1% is American Indian/Alaskan Native

26% are Economically Disadvantaged. With our challenging economic times we are seeing a rise in this number. This is a 5% increase over a 1 year period.

12% receive services through Special Education.  
Less than 1% are English Language Learners

We have over 2,300 employees

92.9% of our teaching staff is highly qualified and we are one of the highest ranked counties in the state. Each of our staff members works tirelessly to ensure that our children are safe and educated to their fullest potential. We have increased our focus on Professional Development to continuously improve the skill development of our staff and to meet the needs of all of our employee groups.

Next, our Maryland State Assessment data is impressive. This is better known as MSA data. In the assessed areas of reading, take a look at our 4 year trend. Absorb it and take note of the extraordinary growth in each grade. In the assessed area of math, take a look at our 4 year trend. Absorb it and take note of the extraordinary growth in the area as well. In the assessed grades of 3-8, our averages are higher than the overall State of Maryland averages and we have made remarkable gains in 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade math.

We continue to improve each year. Look at the 21.3 point growth and 24.8 point growth. This defines a strong future for our school system because student success is building from year to year.

Our foundational data in the elementary schools is exceptionally strong and this will lead to many years of sustained success.

In grades 3-5, in reading and math, our students are scoring at the high 80's and low 90 percentages for levels of proficiency and for the first time, we have seen higher levels of advanced performance than levels of proficiency. Note the categories with stars. This is phenomenal.

Four of our elementary schools: Leonardtown, Piney Point, Town Creek and White Marsh were placed on the Washington Post Top 100 High Performing Elementary Schools list and at Ridge Elementary School, 100% of our 4<sup>th</sup> Grade achieved proficiency in the area of Math.

Our High School Assessment (HSA) data is also impressive.

We have made gains in all four assessed areas of Algebra, Biology, Government and English II. We are well above the state averages and we have made significant gains from the previous year.

95% of our seniors have already passed the High School Assessment. This means that 9.5 out of 10 students have met the requirement already. This is among the highest performance in the State of Maryland.

Additionally, we have begun to significantly close the achievement gap of students represented in the various student groups. This has been a sustained and intense focus for four straight years. All instructional decisions and interventions are determined by using student data.

Our work is not done.

Because of our student performance, I am pleased and honored to announce publicly that every elementary, every middle and every high school in St. Mary's County made AYP...Adequate Yearly Progress. Additionally, our school system made AYP. This means that in every category of student performance, our students met the standard of achievement as defined by the state and federal government. Only six school districts in the State of Maryland accomplished this feat. This is the first time that St. Mary's County has achieved this mark.

Other great news is that under the strong leadership of principal Susie Fowler and her team of outstanding teachers and staff members, Lexington Park Elementary School not only made AYP but their accomplishment removed them from the State watch list. This is huge news. Way to go Lexington Park Elementary School. Also, under the focused leadership of principal Maureen Montgomery and her team of outstanding teachers and staff members, Spring Ridge Middle School made AYP and one more year of sustained progress will find them off the list as well. This is huge news. Way to go Spring Ridge Middle School.

Now, I would like to put this in a broader context.

Schools in the State of Maryland have been ranked as 3<sup>rd</sup> in the United States. Think about it, if we are one of the top 6 districts in a State that is ranked 3<sup>rd</sup> in the Nation, where does that place us? I would say that we are breathing some rarified air. Our teachers, principals, and staff are doing an excellent job of ensuring that all children are receiving a high quality education. As Mrs. Cathy Allen shared at the Board meeting last week, "St. Mary's County Public Schools will be recognized in an MGT Report to the Maryland legislature as one of four school systems who are high performing school districts. We have moved from good to great."

Please give a round of applause to all of our principals, teachers, staff and students for accomplishing this remarkable achievement.

Let me also take this time to recognize some of our exemplary staff who make all of our successes possible:

We have in attendance, Ms. Bonnie Beavan, from Spring Ridge Middle School, who was our Teacher of the Year selection for our county. She represents the best of the best of our teaching staff. Bonnie, please stand.

Also, our Washington Post Agnes Meyer Teacher of the Year is with us. Mr. Ben Peterson is a phenomenal teacher from the newly renovated Leonardtown Elementary School. Ben, please stand.

Additionally, our Washington Post Distinguished Educational Leader is with us today. Ms. Kakie Miluski is the outstanding principal of Town Creek Elementary School. Kakie, please stand.

Also, I would like to recognize the following staff for receiving awards as follows:

- Mr. Mark Smith, as the first recipient of the Lifetime Achievement Award from MSDE's 21<sup>st</sup> Century Extended Learning Program. Mark is recognized for his work with the after school programs. Stand up, Mark.
- Brian Weisner, head coach of the Great Mills High School girl's basketball team, was named coach of the year by the National Federation of State High Schools' Coaches Association. Stand up, Brian. His girls went to the final 4 in the State playoffs.
- Mr. Rocco Aiello, was named the 2008 National Adapted Physical Education Teacher of the Year. Stand up, Rocco.
- Ms. Beverly Dahlstrom was named the 2008 Educational Office Professional of the Year by the Maryland Association of Educational Office Professionals. Stand up, Beverly.
- Ms. Margarita Rochow for the 2008 Hope Swann Educator's Hall of Fame Award. Stand up, Margarita.
- Ms. Mary Kaye Roper as the 2008 State of Maryland Physical Education Teacher of the Year. Stand up, Mary Kaye.
- Ms. Jeanette Offenbacher received her National Board Certification. Stand up, Jeanette.
- SMECO Outstanding Mathematics Teachers are:
  - Mr. John Ballard – Lexington Park Elementary School
  - Ms. Cheryl Corwin – Leonardtown Middle School
  - Ms. Anne Wincelowicz – Leonardtown High SchoolStand up.

- SMECO Outstanding Science Teachers are:
  - Ms. Linda Stewart – Mechanicsville Elementary School
  - Ms. Jennifer Carter – Leonardtown Middle School
  - Ms. Emily Huff – Leonardtown High School
 Stand up.
- Leonardtown Rotary Club Teacher Scholarships:
  - Ms. Patricia Parsons- Benjamin Banneker Elementary School
  - Ms. Linda Ronniger – Leonardtown Elementary School
  - Ms. Bonnie Skinner – Dr. James A. Forrest Career and Technology Center
 Stand up.
- Lexington Park Rotary Marco Polo Award – Ms. Wendy Tarr – Leonardtown Middle School  
Stand up, Wendy.
- Ms. Lynn Cullins – parent from Dynard Elementary School for receiving the Comcast Parent Volunteer Award. Additionally, she was a finalist for the overall award.  
Stand up, Lynn.
- Last, but not least, is Ms. Jen Henderson.  
Under Jen Henderson’s leadership, the Leonardtown High School girl’s soccer team went to the state finals and earned the title of 4A Girl’s Soccer State of Maryland Champions. Take a look at this picture on the front page of today’s Enterprise. It says it all... This was an exciting night for all of St. Mary’s County. Additionally, Jen has just been selected as the SMAC Soccer Coach of the Year. This is the 2<sup>nd</sup> time in 3 years to be State Champions as well as coach of the year.  
Stand up, Jen. (standing ovation) You make us so proud.
- As of 11/10/08, there have been 346 Work Hard and Be Nice awards issued. This award acknowledges random acts of kindness and acts of going above and beyond the call of duty.

Our teachers, our support staff, and our leadership staff are among the best in the state, and I dare say the nation. Our teacher salaries remain competitive with the rest of the State of Maryland and the Southern Maryland region. However, we are beginning to lose some ground. We cannot afford to backslide and lose teachers to Calvert and Charles because of salary issues. Our starting teacher salary is \$43,240 which places us 7<sup>th</sup> in the state, but we lag behind Charles and Calvert. Additionally, our administrative salaries are the lowest of the three Southern Maryland counties. We must do better in future years to address these areas to ensure quality leaders and teachers in all our schools. Our staff works tirelessly to ensure our students achieve at the highest levels, and they are succeeding.

Our SAT scores exceed State and National averages and for the first time our SAT scores were the highest of the three Southern Maryland counties. The number of students taking the SAT is at an all-time high. The number of students participating in Advanced Placement courses is on the rise and our Challenge Index is very high, and this is a rating which focuses on a rigorous academic program.

We have maintained small class sizes. All of our elementary schools have full day kindergarten programs in place and the data is remarkable. I visit these classrooms often, and ladies and gentlemen, the majority of our children are now leaving kindergarten as readers. Our goal of having all students reading on grade level by grade 3 is being achieved. This is our benchmark for defining the future academic success of our children. It is about teaching students to read in grades PreK-2 and it is about students reading to learn in grades 3 and beyond. If students cannot read, how can they learn?

We have implemented a data warehouse that allows our teachers to track the performance results of each and every child to ensure that instructional decisions are data driven. All benchmark assessments are aligned with our state curriculum.

We have made it a budget priority to ensure that each child has a textbook for his or her subjects.

We have placed a greater emphasis on technology and we have implemented a new student information management system entitled eSchool plus. Parents can now log on and view their child's grades and view their attendance record. As a result, our attendance data is at an all time high. All elementary and middle schools achieved the state standard of 95% attendance. At the high school level – one made 95% and the other two were above 90%. Students must be in school every day.

We have increased our focus on improving our student attendance data by strengthening our attendance policy. We have adjusted our school system calendar to ensure that students are in school each and every day. Parents should plan vacations during winter and spring breaks and avoid taking their children out of school for extended periods of time during lawful days of school.

Also, in collaboration with County Government and the St. Mary's County Health Department, we are immunizing all of our elementary school students to prevent an outbreak of the flu. Thank you Dr. Icenhower and the Board of County Commissioners for supporting this effort. This assists in keeping our kids healthy and in school every day.

Our students are active citizens, as demonstrated by a tremendous campaign of kids helping kids through the Harvest for Hungry program. This service learning project is number one in the state of Maryland. We collected over 300,000 pounds of food last year. Simply phenomenal!

We have implemented an educational pathways model that provides choice and meets the learning needs of all our students. We are responding to the needs of our workforce.

One of the initial pathways we have opened is through the Chesapeake Public Charter School. It is in year three and thriving.

This year we opened an Academy of Finance at Chopticon High School; providing students with focused instruction in the financial services industry by providing field and internship opportunities in the business community.

We have placed an aggressive increased focus on Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics through our STEM program. We have developed STEM academies at Lexington Park Elementary School, Spring Ridge Middle School, and Great Mills High School. Our students win once again and we are addressing the work force pipeline at the same time. We thank Congressman Steny Hoyer, for a \$487,000 federal grant for implementation of our STEM program.

Another pathway we have put in place serves a larger at-risk group of middle school students and is geared at preventing drop out. One of the newly established programs at the Dr. James A. Forrest Career and Technology Center, entitled Tech Connect, has selectively identified 75 at-risk students to enroll in the program in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade. To date, this program is receiving great reviews and we want our students to stay in school.

This year, we opened the Fairlead Academy. This is a ninth grade academy which is defined as an alternative pathway for high school success serving 60 students.

Our first new elementary school to be built in over 20 years is now under construction and it will open in the fall of 2009. The name of our school is EVERGREEN Elementary School. We are focusing our efforts to make this a LEED Gold Certified Green School that will contain features such as daylighting, waterless urinals, an energy kiosk, a geothermal heating system and many more. Our school system must lead the way in issues related to the environment so that our children can be good stewards of the environment.

Additionally, we have implemented an Energy Conservation program that is working. We have saved over \$450,000 in energy costs in a one year period.

At this time, please direct your attention to the side doors of the room and you will see WATTSON, our energy detective. It is his job to work with our students on finding ways to save energy. Thank you, Wattson.

We have some of the cleanest and best school facilities that I have ever witnessed anywhere. Thank you to all of our Maintenance and Building Service Staff.

And

We have placed a greater and ever vigilant focus on school safety including hiring a supervisor of safety. We have improved our communications with parents. We have implemented a safe drivers program and all staff now have identification badges. All volunteers are being registered and checked through a sex offender data base and to date we have cleared and registered 3,800 volunteers.

We have begun installing enhanced security entrances at all of our schools and we are accounting for our visitors by enhancing our sign-in procedures. Schools must remain sacred and cherished places and no one must cause harm to our children and staff.

We are fully addressing the 15 points of priority.

AND

Our school system is aligned to provide the very best service for each child. We are not implementing random acts of improvement for the sake of doing them. All of our acts are aligned so that they assist in achieving our academic goals. We are stopping things that are not working and we are implementing interventions and best practices that are working.

I can go on and on with our successes because they are abundant.

Now, I want to change my direction and focus on our challenges. We are not satisfied with where we are. Yes, we are making remarkable gains, and we are focusing on continuous improvement; yet we are being brutally honest about our data. We have much work to do. We are operating with a high level of urgency and impatience.

We cannot allow another day, month, and/or year to go by knowing that all of our students are not performing to levels of proficiency. We must ensure that every child has the necessary resources and supports to be successful.

Our drop out rate is 2.80% and our graduation rate is 86.2%. We must improve these metrics. We are dissecting this issue and our high schools are urgently addressing this. The programs at the Dr. James A. Forrest Career and Technology Center are remarkable and linked to the workforce needs of our county. Through our Tech Connect program at the Forrest Center, and through the Fairlead Academy, we are casting a larger safety net in an attempt to ensure that our students stay in school and graduate.

In “An Open Letter to the American People,” contained in the report, entitled “The Silent Epidemic” written for the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the following was stated: “There is a high school dropout epidemic in America. Each year, almost one third of all high school students and nearly one half of all black, Hispanic and Native Americans – fail to graduate from high school. The consequences remain tragic.”

We are aware of the drop out problems and are doing everything possible to turn this trend around.

The graduation rate cannot be solved in the 12<sup>th</sup> grade; it has to be examined throughout the child's entire educational experience. We realize that the 9<sup>th</sup> grade year is the time when if students are going to drop out, they do drop out. We are not going to let that happen. It has great impact on our community if our students do not graduate. We are being proactive, with programs like Tech Connect and the Fairlead Academy. Both of these programs serve students as they enter high school, providing a pathway to success and graduation. It is my vision to expand the Fairlead Academy concept to other sites in the county.

Our achievement gap is closing, but we must eliminate it. Our staff is working on this issue every day. Teachers and administrators meet regularly in professional learning communities or PLCs. It is in these PLCs that teachers closely examine achievement levels and student proficiencies to design tailored instructional plans and interventions.

We are disaggregating the data and having honest discussions about the lower performance of some of our students. These collaborative planning efforts by teachers are paying off.

Our math scores in grades 7 and 8 have improved. However, we know more work still lies ahead and we are proactively addressing our entire middle school program. We are reviewing the overall middle school model of instructional delivery. There must exist a seamless transition from elementary to middle to high school and we are beginning to see student achievement rise in the data areas of 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade math.

We have examined our technological needs. Although we have made considerable enhancements this year, we must do more. We have to increase our focus on providing equity for all of our schools. We have great needs in this arena and we must be able to fully implement our Technology Plan. This area has suffered way too long and it needs ongoing attention.

As you know, the High School Assessments are required for graduation for the Class of 2009.

We have to address the demands of HSA remediation and fully implement the requirements of the BRIDGE Plan and allow all of our students to graduate.

We have increased needs for after school programs. Our funding for our after school program is stitched together by various grants and donations. Recently, we received a Future Leaders of the World (FLOW) Grant for \$500,000 to support student mentoring. We must be able to continue to implement new and creative initiatives to meet the needs of students. We must take advantage of the rich resources that we have with our Naval Air Station and the business community.

Specifically, we want to expand additional educational pathways for our students. We are not finished and planning is underway to unveil additional pathways in the near future. We have some very bright and talented students and we must ensure that they are

being challenged to their fullest potential. We must raise the bar for all students and eliminate the gap that exists between student groups. We cannot rest one day.

Lastly, we need to continue to address the safety and security needs of our students, staff and schools. Our students and staff must be safe and free from disruption each and every day. This is something that we must all own and address. School Resource Officers at the secondary level are a vital part of this overall safety plan. Security vestibules, staff ID's, our safe driving initiative, and volunteer screening program all work together to keep our children safe. We will be ever vigilant in this arena and never let our guard down.

We know our challenges. We recognize our successes. We must continue to move to the next level of greatness.

Our operating budget is  
\$176.5 million dollars.

85% (\$149 million): Salary and Benefits  
10% (\$19 million) Transportation, Energy, Oil, Fuel  
and  
5% (8 million) Programs/Textbooks/Etc.

Our energy bills are enormous. Would anyone like to guess the amount of our monthly electric bill? Any guesses?

The answer is:

It is between \$350,000 and \$400,000 per month, or roughly \$4.5 Million Per Year.

Leonardtwn High School alone is \$40,000 per month.

What do you think our daily diesel fuel bill is to run our school buses?  
Any guesses? The answer is:

\$15,000 Daily  
\$75,000 Weekly  
\$300,000 Monthly  
\$3.0 Million Per Year  
Now, that's a dose of reality.

We must continue our conservation efforts.

As you know, the governor and our law makers are grappling with the doomsday budget issues and scenarios. Education cannot suffer in St. Mary's County. We have made significant gains and we cannot backslide. We must meet the demands of increased fuel and energy costs, rising health care costs, and the need for competitive wages, and still

allowing opportunities to institute programs needed to address the instructional needs of all children. We must be able to implement new initiatives and provide additional classroom supports to address current instructional needs and to ensure a high quality education for all children. We must do better, because it is about the children.

We are a high performing school system.  
It is about the children and our children are wonderful!!!!

Each of us has a vested interest in the success of our school system. We must nurture it so that it continues to grow and prosper. Recently, Governor O'Malley stated, "So goes the quality of our public schools in the State of Maryland so goes the quality of our State." I will go a step further in saying, "So goes the St. Mary's County Public Schools, so goes St. Mary's County." A vibrant healthy productive school system spawns a vital, high quality of life and community where all children win every day.

Ladies and gentlemen, I am honored to serve as the superintendent of this magnificent school system. To lead is to serve, and to serve our 17,000 students every day is a true privilege.

Our purpose is defined, our focus is clear and our direction is leading to greatness.

Our annual report and initiatives sheet provide more information about our wonderful school system. Please take the time to read these handouts.

As I said, the State of the St. Mary's County Public School System is **STRONG**. We are a high performing school system, but we must keep it that way and work together to make it even better.

Nationally, there is so much chatter about all that is wrong with public education. However, in St. Mary's County, the converse is our reality. In St. Mary's County, there is so much right with our public schools and we must keep it that way.

Today, join with me, to recommit to improve the quality of life for ALL children in St. Mary's County. We must protect them, nurture them, teach them, and be loyal to them.

With the support of everyone in this room, I know that we can make this the great school system that our community deserves. Our work is not done. We have challenges ahead of us. With your unwavering support and resolve to improve the quality of life for all children, we will prevail in our pursuit for greatness.

If it can be done, it can be done in St. Mary's County.

And, the bottom line is, it will be done.

Ladies and Gentlemen,  
Our best days are yet to come.

Thank you very much and remember, *Work Hard and Be Nice.*



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***“WORK HARD  
AND  
BE NICE”***

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**Dr. Michael J. Martirano,**  
*Superintendent of Schools*  
St. Mary's County Public Schools