

Message from the Principal
November 2009

It's hard to believe that the first marking period of the school year is behind us already. We've made many changes here this year and we are very anxious to see the results of our labors. As I mentioned in September, we instituted a new Ninth Grade Transition Academy this fall. Our freshmen spend most of their day in the main hall on the second floor and even eat lunch apart from the rest of the students in the school. Our ninth graders also know that we will not accept anything less than their best effort. If a student in the academy misses an assignment, they are notified that if it is not turned in the next morning before the start of the school day that they will go to "fifth block." The regular freshman day is broken into four blocks of time and fifth block runs from the end of the regular day until 4:15. Students who go to fifth block get extra help to get caught up on missing assignments. Faculty members from the academy are available every day to help any student who wants to get a little extra attention. In the next several weeks we will be carefully analyzing both achievement and student discipline data to determine if the programs in the Ninth Grade Academy are having the impact that we hoped for. I want to extend my thanks to all of the teachers in the academy as well as to Mr. Miro our Ninth Grade Academy Coordinator, and to Mr. Kohan the Assistant Principal supervising this effort.

We are also paying closer and more structured attention to the climate of the school as a whole. Our other Assistant Principal, Ms. Valerie Martinez, is heading a new standing committee that is charged with creating and implementing practices that have a positive impact on the climate of the school as a whole. This group is currently investigating a school wide progressive discipline program and looking at ways to hold students accountable while minimizing the amount of class time missed.

In the third week of October, Dickinson celebrated spirit week and Homecoming. The week culminated with a school-wide pep rally on Friday afternoon, the Homecoming football game on Friday night and the Homecoming Dance on Saturday night. More than 300 students came out – dressed to impress and danced the night away.

We also held our first Community Outreach night during the first week on November. We took our show on the road to Evan G. Shortlidge Elementary School on the north side of the City of Wilmington. We are committed to an ongoing effort to build meaningful connections with all of the communities and families that we serve. If you are interested in getting involved in PTA, Performing Arts Boosters, Sports Boosters, or the Community Advisory Board, please contact me at 992-5500 or at byron.murphy@redclay.k12.de.us