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# OSDeveloper

-Strengthening the knowledge, skills, and practices of  
Montgomery County Public Schools' staff and stakeholders

301-601-0300

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## The Effort-based Belief

Judy Duffield, Center for Skillful Teaching

“Smart is not something you just are; smart is something you can *get*.” This simple statement by Jeff Howard, president of The Efficacy Institute, is the heart of the effort-based belief. This belief holds that a strategic approach to hard work is the pathway to high achievement for the vast majority of our students—indeed, for the vast majority of the population as a whole.

For a country that has grown up on Thomas Edison’s observation that genius is one percent inspiration and ninety-nine percent perspiration, the effort-based belief should make perfect sense. Our popular culture abounds with stories of athletes who have overcome astonishing barriers with determination, hard work, and coaching to excel at their sports, and with best-selling authors who have survived countless rejections from publishers to hone their craft and achieve great literary or commercial success. In fact, it seems the effort-based belief is accepted in every aspect of American society but one—the educational arena; in this realm, the effort-based belief has been preempted by the ability-based belief, around which the educational systems of the United States and Europe traditionally have been organized.

The ability-based belief came to prominence in the last century in reaction to several societal forces. It proposes that intelligence is a quantifiable entity (IQ) that is innate, fixed, and unevenly distributed across the population—we’re born with “it;” “it” stays

the same throughout our lives; and some of us have more (or less) of “it” than others. This measure of intelligence is the prime determinant of achievement, thus justifying the earmarking of the best educational resources for those who are on the high end of the scale since they are, the theory goes, predestined to achieve. This belief has led to the exclusion of the majority of students from resources and opportunities, as well as from rigorous expectations.

In sharp contrast, holders of the effort-based belief see innate ability as just the starting point of the learning process. This belief holds that hard work and a strategic approach to the task are the means to achievement. This achievement, in turn, breeds confidence in the learner, which leads to a willingness to expend more effort, thus repeating the cycle. As a result, ability grows, incrementally. Instead of being viewed as static, ability is viewed as dynamic—we can all get smarter.

The expenditure of effort alone, however, is not the goal. Effective effort is a means to an end, and that end is the achievement, or mastery, of world-class standards. To that end, a core component of the effort-based belief is instruction not only in content, but also in tools of mastery. This includes making explicit for all students the strategies of accomplished learners and modeling precisely what effective effort looks like. Effective effort can be taught to and mastered by our students, providing them with the lifelong means to “getting smarter.”

## Want More Information About the Effort-based Belief?

- ◆ Howard, Jeff. "You Can't Get There From Here: The Need for a New Logic in Education Reform." *Daedalus* vol. 124, #4 (Spring 1995), pp. 85-92.
- ◆ Hunter, Madeline and George Barker. "If at First...": Attribution Theory in the Classroom." *Educational Leadership*, 45 (October 1987), pp. 50-55.
- ◆ Resnick, Lauren B. "From Aptitude to Effort: A New Foundation for Our Schools." *Daedalus*, vol. 124, #4 (Spring 1995), pp. 55-62.
- ◆ Schulte, Brigid. "Grading for Intelligence With a E for Effort." December 2, 2002. [washingtonpost.com](http://washingtonpost.com).
- ◆ Sylwester, Robert. *A Celebration of Neurons: An Educator's Guide to the Human Brain*. Alexandria, PA : ASCD, 1995.
- ◆ Sternberg, Robert. "What Does It Mean To Be Smart?" *Educational Leadership*. 54 (March 1997), pp. 20-24.



## Components of Effective Effort

Effective effort isn't just working hard. It includes the following components, all of which should be explicitly taught to students:

1. Time
2. Focus
3. Commitment
4. Resourcefulness
5. Strategies
6. Use of Feedback

## Putting the Effort-based Belief into Action

MCPS teachers share strategies for making effective effort a part of their classroom culture:

- ◆ Explicitly teaching students strategies and behaviors for learning effectively (e.g. note-taking, pre-reading strategies, etc.)
- ◆ Reading books and discussing traits of effective effort displayed by the characters
- ◆ Creating an effective effort "train" (or other visual) to represent the effective effort traits
- ◆ Pointing out when students demonstrate effective effort
- ◆ Creating an effective effort bulletin board to display both student work that demonstrates effective effort and quotes from famous people who have succeeded through effort
- ◆ Communicating belief in all students' ability to learn
- ◆ Giving students multiple opportunities to meet the standard, or master the objective, on a given assignment
- ◆ Praising students for their efforts, as well as for the end product
- ◆ Using both effort and achievement rubrics
- ◆ Providing students with opportunities to self-assess so they see the connection between effort and achievement.



## ***Frequently Called Numbers***

### ***Office of Staff Development***

Main Office (301) 601-0300

Darlene Merry, Associate Superintendent (301) 601-0309

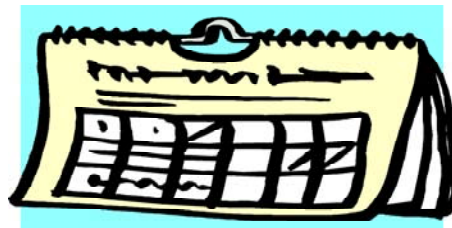
Nicky Diamond, Assistant to the Associate Superintendent (301) 601-0309

Nancy Austin, Training Budget (301) 601-0355

<b>Topic/Area of Interest</b>	<b>Contact</b>	<b>Phone #</b>
<b>Administrator/Leadership Training and Development Programs and Supports</b>		
Secondary Administrators' Development Program	Dr. Gail Covington McBride	353-0864
Elementary Administrators' Development Program	Eric Mills	353-0862
A&S Professional Growth System	Dr. Bob Bastress	601- 4695
High Performing Team Project	Kristen Ehlman	601-4698
Diversity Training and Development	Donna Graves	353-0847
Skillful Leader Training (OAT 1 and OAT 2)	Peg Donnellon	601-4800
MCAASP Tuition Reimbursement	Susan Mitchell	601-0300
<b>Teacher Training and Development Programs and Supports</b>		
Studying Skillful Teaching Training (SST)	Peg Donnellon	601-4800
Staff Development Teacher (SDT) Project and training for other local school specialists and coaches	Betty Collins Sharon Hemphill Linda Natale	601-4600
Content/Curriculum Staff Development	Linda Natale	601-4600
Consulting Teachers	Khanny Lee Lisa Henry	601-2020 601-2021
New Teacher Induction and Mentoring	Gail Epps	353-0861
Mentor and New Teacher Training Stipends	Susan Mitchell	601-0300
eLearning Staff Development Team	John Antonishak	353-0990
Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Courses	Gloria Briggs	601-4869
Teacher Tuition Reimbursement	Sandra Marmol	601-4899
Staff Development Substitute Teachers (SDST)	Doug Prouty	294-6232
Peer Assistance and Review (PAR)	Dr. Bob Bastress Doug Prouty	294-6232
<b>Supporting Services Staff Training and Development Programs and Supports</b>		
Supporting Services Staff Training and Development Supporting Services Staff Tuition Reimbursement	Inger Swimpson Brenda Schaub Betty Montgomery	353-8556
<b>Other Programs and Supports</b>		
Professional Development Schools (PDS) University Partnerships	Dr. Russ Fazio Judy Webster	601-4872 353-8879
Online Training Calendar	John Antonishak	353-0990
Faculty Administration Collaboration Committee (FACC) Training	Inger Swimpson	601-4876

## Upcoming Learning Opportunities

- **School-based Administrator's Prof. Development Series Day 1:** July 9. Contact: Kristen Ehlman via First Class.
- **Elem. Administrators' Development Program:** Selected dates from July 14 – August 14. Contact: Eric Mills via First Class.
- **Second. Administrator's Development Program:** Selected dates from July 22 – August 13. Contact: Gail Covington-McBride via First Class.
- **Staff Development Teacher Training:** Selected dates from June 26 – August 5. Contact: Sharon Hemphill via First Class.
- **Curriculum Implementation Training, Grades 1-5:** Selected dates from June 24 – August 6. Contact: Linda Natale via First Class.
- **New Educator Orientation:** August 11-15. Contact: Gail Epps via First Class.
- **Tech Mod Training:** Selected dates from July 1 – August 7. Contact: John Antonishak via First Class.
- **National Board for Professional Teaching Standards Certification:** Teachers who are interested in participating in National Board Certification should contact Jolynn Tarwater, Christine Frank, or MaryPat Spon via First Class.
- **Other Opportunities:** Please check the OSD website for a complete list of learning opportunities.



### Published by the Office of Staff Development

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