

## About Dr. Weast

Dr. Weast is a former superintendent of the Montgomery County Public Schools, the 16th largest public school district in the U.S., where he directed a comprehensive reform effort to raise academic standards and narrow achievement gaps for more than 140,000 students.

### **What can happen when a school district integrates high-quality early learning across the system as part of a comprehensive Pre-K-12 reform plan?**

- Almost 90 percent of kindergarteners enter first grade with essential early literacy skills.
- Nearly 88 percent of third graders read proficiently.
- Achievement gaps between different racial and ethnic groups across all grade levels decline by double digits.
- About 90 percent of 12th graders graduate from high school.
- About 77 percent of graduating seniors enroll in college.

Over a decade, the Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) in Maryland accomplished these impressive results by setting ambitious objectives for student achievement, providing more children with a critical early learning foundation and linking the skills gained in pre-k with the later grades to significantly strengthen college readiness. And these gains were realized even as the district's population of English language learners grew 103 percent and the number of students receiving a free or reduced-price lunch increased 44 percent.

Dr. Weast was the superintendent of Montgomery County Public Schools for twelve years where he demonstrated an unwavering commitment to ensuring that *all* students graduate prepared and inspired for success in college and careers.

The cornerstone of these efforts was Weast's "reverse engineering" approach in which the system began by explicitly defining what it meant for a student to be college and career ready and then proceeded in identifying the knowledge and skills needed at each level from preK to college for students to reach that target. To ensure its reform plan included a robust early education component, the district allocated federal Title I dollars, which can be used for early learning, to extend Head Start programs from a half day to a full day and to enhance their services through additional professional development and instructional materials. As a result of these initiatives, under Dr. Weast's leadership, Montgomery County Public Schools achieved the following outcomes:

- An independent analysis of graduation rates by *Education Week* found that the district had the highest graduation rate of any large school district in the nation in 2008 and 2009.
- In 2010, half of the district's graduates received a college-ready score of 3 or higher on at least one Advanced Placement (AP) exam while in high school. That is nearly twice the state rate and three times the national rate.
- On each of a dozen metrics, from kindergarten reading evaluations to SAT scores, there has been improvement among all racial and ethnic groups in the district's schools. And by almost every measure, black as well as Hispanic students have narrowed the achievement gap. For instance, in 2009, 95% of third graders in the county scored at the proficient or advanced level on the state reading test — among them 80% of black children, a 100% improvement since 2003.
- Parent satisfaction has ranged from 79.7 to 86.7 percent, compared to a national comparative average of 54 percent from 2005 to 2010.

Dr. Weast's accomplishments were chronicled in a book published by Harvard Education Press in 2009, [\*Leading for Equity: The Pursuit of Excellence\*](#) and in numerous Harvard Business School case studies.