Reflection by Josh Bolles

“Imaging the possibilities.” That is how Glenda Ritz, Superintendent of Public Instruction, began when she came to be a guest speaker for EPPSP groups 31 and 32 at our last class of summer session. She stated that “Imagining the possibilities” was her vision. From that vision evolved the mission of the DOE staff under Superintendent Ritz, which is centered around student equality. Every decision that is made and every action that is taken is rooted and tied back to that vision and mission. This was very clear to me the day I had the opportunity to shadow Superintendent Ritz and the day she came to speak to us at class. It is not hard to see the evidence of this happening. Since last November, there have been plenty of decisions made and actions taken. Bringing reading and literacy instruction to the forefront has been a big focus for the current DOE staff, along with creating a way to evaluate how our public schools are performing and progressing in a more fair manner. Superintendent Ritz and her staff are still working hard with lawmakers to ensure what is happening in our public education system is what is best for students, and in some areas there is still considerable work to be done. (A-F school grading system, implementing common core state standards with a fair and accurate assessment, just to name a few). What really stands out to me is that she is an educator leading educators. She insists on making decisions that are best for students, she has a clear vision and goal and sticks with it in all decisions she makes, her staff is well aware of the mission, vision and goals that have been established, she is always asking questions, reaching out to others, and wanting to learn more. Politics are impossible to escape, however I am encouraged as an educator that we have an educator leading our public schools, with decisions and a clear focus on what is best for our students.

Reflection by Shawn Schlepp

I began my day shadowing Superintendent Glenda Ritz by meeting her at Head Start. This is the first I heard Superintendent Ritz speak of her vision and the means of how she is going about implementing it. Throughout Superintendent Ritz’s day she will ask herself two questions; Is it required by law? Does it align with the vision? Superintendent Ritz’s passion and how much she loves her new position was evident.

When Superintendent Ritz was asked how she is able to sort through all of the former Superintendent State of Indiana’s consolidations, she said she again asks herself two questions; Is it required by rule or law? Does it align with our vision? I saw Superintendent Ritz truly model how she asks herself these two questions throughout the day. I walked away with a new lens and a sense of awe of what and how much Superintendent Ritz does during her day and with such dedication. I have spoken often of this day and how fortunate we are. I feel educators should be hopeful as we look to the future in education with Superintendent Ritz as our leader in the state of Indiana.
Recruitment Night: A Huge Success
By Jeff Harrison, Group 32

On September 10th, EPPSP group 31 and 32 hosted the annual Recruitment Night for perspective candidates for group 33. We had over 40 individuals in attendance. We began with a brief introduction and then followed up with four informative segments. The first was an overview of EPPSP. Next, we had a presentation in regards to the trip to Finland this coming summer by members of group 31 who traveled there in July 2012. We then explained the application and interview process and concluded with a panel discussion.

The panelists were Erica Buchanan (group 28), Robb Hedges (group 27) and Anne Arroyo (group 30). They did a fantastic job inspiring current students as well as the potential recruits on how EPPSP contributed to their success. All in all, the evening went off without a hitch, and we look forward to interviewing educators for group 33.

Mock Interview Night
By Berlin Hughes, Group 32

Mock Interview Night for 2013 was a huge success! On behalf of Cohort 31 and 32, we would like to thank all of the volunteers who have taken time out of their busy schedules to contribute to the EPPSP program. We greatly appreciate it, and we are excited to have had the opportunity to work together.

The evening consisted of three rotations of a one-on-one interview, a recent hire interview panel, as well as a session directed by HR directors on tips and tricks on the hiring process. All cohort members were given a detailed guide in folders, which gave an overview of the evening.

Those who interviewed cohort members stayed at their table the entire night, while the current EPPSP members travelled to the different rotations. All of our volunteers took the time to debrief afterward, and also took the time to reflect and debrief during the interviews.

This was a magnificent learning experience for EPPSP Cohorts 31 and 32. Thanks to everyone who participated and made this a shining success!

Personal Patter:

Brianna Vinup (Group 30) welcomed daughter Ainsley Harper Vinup on February 14, 2013
Tracy Bunting (Group 32): Upcoming wedding to Ty Swinton on April 14
Romona Camarata (Group 12): Held media training for Indiana Public School Partnership Symposium
In preparation for summer class, EPPSP cohort members were asked to read two books by Karin Chenoweth, Getting It Done, Leading Academic Success in Unexpected Schools and How It’s Being Done, Urgent Lessons From Unexpected Schools. After reading these books it was easy to see why the school that I have taught in for close to 5 years, Christel House Academy, was honored as one of MetLife Foundation-NASSP Breakthrough Schools 2013.

In reading Getting It Done, we outlined common factors that led unexpected schools to academic success. We noted the following themes: the belief that all children can learn, setting a vision and a system to monitor it, de-privatizing teaching, building the skill and competency of teachers so they become experts and leaders, fostering respectful environments, distributing leadership throughout the building, and several more. Noting these themes, I couldn’t help but reflect upon the academic success of my unexpected school.

Serving a population where nearly 94% of students live in poverty, we have to provide more than an average education to students. Part of what makes CHA so effective is that staff members are deeply involved in students’ lives and provide multiple layers of support to the students and families. We get to know our families and learn to understand the barriers that keep so many of them in poverty. We understand that although our students come from diverse backgrounds, and low socio-economic status, this cannot have any barrier on the high and rigorous academic standards we set for our students. The belief “every child can learn” is evident in every classroom at CHA.

Reflecting on the lessons learned in Getting it Done, and my exceptional education gained through EPPSP, I recognize the guiding principals of successful schools and am fortunate enough to see them in action every day. At CHA, our teachers are constantly collaborating, pouring over data, and making instructional decisions based on student learning, best practices, and with goals in mind. Our teachers are extremely reflective in practice and teach our students to be reflective through our school wide culture of revision. Our director believes his staff to be professional educators and provides the staff with autonomy. Leadership is shared throughout the building with teachers as leaders and mentors in many capacities, and the school is built upon the four core values of Respect, Responsibility, Independence, and Integrity.

Just in the time that I have been with Christel House, I have witnessed and lived the long and challenging road to success. I have heard the stories and have seen the data from the days when we were the lowest performing school in the state. We continue to improve for our students and strive toward higher and higher goals every year. We have been recognized as achieving “Exemplary” status in 2006-2007, Title 1 Distinguished School in 2011, awarded the $1 Million Mind Trust Charter School Incubator Grant in 2012, our middle school was the first charter school to be designated as a School to Watch in 2012 by the National Forum of Accelerate Middle-Grades Reform, and, as mentioned above, recognized as one of MetLife Foundation-NASSP Breakthrough Schools 2013.

We have a mission at Christel House - to break the cycle of poverty and to transform lives. This mission guides our daily work and our students are constant reminders of all that we are doing right!

Jenny Reynolds, EPPSP Group 31
2nd Grade teacher, Lead teacher

Upcoming Events:

• Interview Night for Group 33 will be November 14, 2013
• Orientation for Group 33 will be Saturday, January 25, 2014
• Groups 32 & 33 will be in Finland July 7-16, 2014