

## **WORDS FOR THE GOVERNOR AND COMMISSIONER**

**July 7, 2011**

**Linda Gilbert**

**We began this journey a year and a half ago with four words. And those four words were: We can do this!**

**Murfreesboro City Schools is a district focused on the whole child—the physical, emotional, psychological, and academic health of each individual child.**

**With the help of MTSU’s Dr. Bob Eaker and the formation of professional learning communities, we have asked the four important questions:**

- What do we want our students to learn?**
- How will we know if each student has learned it?**
- How will we respond when some students do not learn it?**
- How can we extend and enrich the learning for students who have demonstrated proficiency—who have learned it?**

**Professional learning communities and the neverending support of community partners too numerous to mention have allowed us to form a solid foundation for our school district. And that foundation is in the form of an upside down triangle.**

**Most organization charts are in the form of a triangle with the CEO on the top, but in Murfreesboro, we have turned the organization triangle upside down. In Murfreesboro, the children are at the top. Everything we do in this district is in response to the needs of children.**

**Let me show you what that upside down triangle looks like in real life. Murfreesboro has a Family Learning Center in one of this city’s federal housing projects. And this past year, we added social workers to our school district. Yesterday, our Coordinator of Social Services, Tonya Hobbs, was at Franklin Heights and I got this email from her this morning: “As I sit here drinking my tea and trying to take all of this in, my heart is so full and grateful. Yesterday, when I spoke to the parents at Franklin Heights, I told them our goal is that no door in life will ever be closed to**

**their children based on education. I told them that we want their children to be able to compete with anyone, anywhere and be successful. I told them we want their children to have opportunities beyond high school and beyond college. I told them we want their children to dream big and have the skills to back those dreams up and make them reality. And with what's happening today, I feel like the dreams of all those children and parents and families are a little closer to coming true. And that knowledge makes me happy in a way I can't fully express, but I know you understand."**

**In this room, you have among you amazing educators. Jim Bjork and Sheri Arnette from Northfield or Sarah Todd and Jon Simmons from Black Fox. Principals Gene Loyd and Joe Thompson. Natalie Hopkins and the Murfreesboro Education Association. Tremendous support staff and Central Office staff. Dedicated School Board members, City Council members, higher education representatives, and community members. And they join hands together every single day ...and they focus on the children and they say: WE CAN DO THIS!**

**Governor Haslam and Commissioner Huffman, there are educators, administrators, support personnel, Central Office staffs, union representatives, elected officials, higher education representatives, and community members all over this state saying, with both of you: For the children, WE CAN DO THIS!**

**We have a vision in Murfreesboro.**

**We have a vision of a city:**

**In which no door in life will ever be closed to children based on education. Children are able to compete with anyone, anywhere and be successful. Children have opportunities beyond high school, and into college and beyond.**

**And children can dream big and have the skills to back up those dreams and make them reality.**

**We have a vision in this city...we have a vision in this state. And this year, we have proven that vision can become reality. Thank you Governor Haslam and Commissioner Huffman for being here today. Thank you for**

**your vision. Thank you for knowing that vision can become reality. And thank you for standing with educators across this state and saying with us: WE CAN DO THIS!**