

# Cheeseman's Chronicles

Matthew Cheeseman, Superintendent of Schools

## Changing Society and Schools

Recently I had the privilege of reviewing a short documentary film on our changing society. It sets forth for the viewer how rapidly the world is changing and how rapidly job obsolescence becomes a reality. It underscored for me so very vividly some of the dramatic changes that my parents and grandparents had seen in their lifetime. Many of you probably remember them also. They include, but are not limited to:

- Automobiles that could be worked on in your front yard or by a neighborhood friend. Changing sparkplugs was something most men, and some women could do;
- Grocery stores where you waited in line and the teller either added up what you owed or had to read the price of

every item and then manually ring it in the cash register;

and

- Televisions that were black and white and were easy to fix just by changing one tube.

Today, in contrast, automobiles are high tech and the average person, cannot go to a neighbor or friend to have his or her car repaired. A person must go to a garage or automobile dealer that has a high-tech computer that diagnoses what is wrong so that the automobile technician can fix it.

Also, at most major grocery store chains today, a scanner is used to very quickly ring in the cost of your groceries.

Simultaneously, someone in the grocery chain office monitors what people are buying and orders items for stocking in the grocery store chain based on customer choice preferences.

Similarly, black and white televisions have now been replaced with high-definition televisions with flat screens which are all electronically run. This means that the average television or appliance business cannot just replace a bulb to fix a television set,

but must engage in a series of high-tech procedures to determine what is wrong and to fix the item with the right transistor or other electronic part.

Each of the aforementioned items illustrates how much our world has changed in our lifetime. However, they are also indicative of the major changes that have evolved in skills needed to become a self-sufficient, successful employee or employer in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

The changes in our world and the dramatic changes that are underway in the world of work, mean that schools cannot provide students skills for yesterday's jobs. New vocations and job opportunities are being created daily that will require job skills that we cannot even now identify.

Given these emerging national and international forces, it is incumbent upon schools to not only educate students in the three basic subjects of reading, writing and arithmetic. Schools must also provide students with the critical thinking and creativity skills, team work skills, and problem solving skills that will enable them to successfully transition to new work venues when new technological and human advances occur that create new job opportunities.

To accomplish this and to ensure that students graduate with these skills requires a different set of curriculum experiences. It requires to work in teams to solve problems, to think “outside the box” in developing new and more practical solutions to emerging job requirements and in thinking critically about how to be more cost efficient and effective both on the job and at home. Equally important, the world of international employment that is emerging requires workers who possess not only technological proficiency in how to use existing technologies, but also the skills to continue learning as new technologies emerge.

The Perquimans County Board of Education, through its strategic planning process set forth making 21<sup>st</sup> Century learning skills a primary focus. We are confident that this initiative will reap significant positive dividends for the children and youth in our care and also make our county more competitive in the area of economic development which will, in the long run, create a greater number and higher paying jobs for the citizens of Perquimans County.