

# School leaders pool resources to gain leadership training

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STAFF WRITER

**TABERNACLE** — More than 120 school officials from Burlington County came together at Seneca High School on Wednesday morning to learn about the importance of leadership.

The group of officials was made up of superintendents, assistant superintendents, principals and directors of curriculum as a part of a joint initiative that began last school year.

“Collaboration brings out a synergy,” said Tom Olson, director of curriculum in Medford and president of the Burlington County Curriculum Consortium. “I think it brings new ideas to the table.”

Olson organized the event, which featured educator and speaker Tracey Severns; Denise King, principal at the B. Bernice Young School in Burlington Township and president of the Burlington County Principals & Supervisors Association; and Joseph Langowski, the Lumberton superintendent and president of the Burlington County Superintendents Association.

“Having everyone at the table, having a conversation, being collaborative is really a key point for what we need to do to empower our students and our staff to improve,” King said. “It’s all about the kids and student achievement.”

Severns, who was a teacher, principal, superintendent, and administrator with the New Jersey Department of Education, wanted to stress to those in attendance the importance of a leader’s role in helping students succeed.

“This work is so big, if we don’t do it together, then we don’t leverage the benefit of a team,” she said.

Severns emphasized having everyone “pull on the same rope in the same direction” to make a school run smoothly. She said she was glad to see a variety of administrators coming together to work with one another.

“I know the importance of you in the lives that you serve,” she told the group.

The original idea to bring all three groups together began in November 2015,

when the principals association reached out to the superintendents group to tackle the changing environment of education.

“With evolving requirements and new initiatives at the local and state level, this year our executive board discussed the importance of networking with the Burlington County Superintendents Association,” a letter from the Burlington County Principals & Supervisors Association read. “We know everyone has a demanding schedule. However, we believe the connection of our boards will be beneficial to developing an engaging and productive network of Burlington County.”

The county’s 40 school districts vary in size, from one-school districts, such as Beverly and Springfield, to large regional ones like Lenape, which pulls students from eight towns. This can make it hard for some districts to bring in professional speakers or gather enough people to attend the sessions.

Lenape Regional Superintendent Carol Birnbohm said in her opening remarks that this type of collaboration can benefit all types of districts, especially because of turnover and change that often take place at the administrative level.

“The need for getting great professional development for our administrators is great, and it’s difficult and costly to do that if you only have a few in your school district,” Birnbohm said. “Even in a district as large as ours, when we had Tracey Severns here last time, we pulled together nine school districts to do that event.”

She emphasized that shared services and programs are very popular in the county and that this was another way to share resources.

“We have many shared programs, more than, I think, any other counties in New Jersey,” Birnbohm said.

Wednesday’s gathering was the second joint event held by the three organizations this school year.

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