

Dr. Glen Worthy - "How do I support you?"



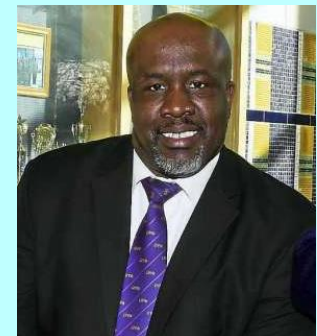
As Dr. Glen Worthy was being introduced to Senior Leadership at the Department of Children and Families, the fire alarm went off in the hallway and interrupted the meeting. A coincidence or a sign of things to come?

He is now the Department's Educational Administrator for Juvenile Justice Services. Created pursuant to Public Act 21-174, this new position will direct a unit that provides educational oversight for students on a high school diploma (non-GED) track in all justice facilities or who are incarcerated. The goal is to create standardization, reentry processes and quality assurance across the system while continuing to assess for needed resources to meet the needs of this unique population.

Challenges are nothing new to this career educator in his 30th year. After all, he was a former Honorable Mention All-American linebacker at Western Connecticut State University. Before attending Western Connecticut, he attended Wilbur Cross High School in New Haven and after he graduated from Western with a degree in Health Education, he returned to Wilbur Cross as a Head Football coach.

He is the first child in his family to graduate from college.

Dr. Worthy has been given some of the toughest assignments in New Haven. As a principal at Hill Central, a K-8 school, he launched a "turnaround" effort to overhaul this low-performing school. Using a "distributive leadership" model, along with natural staff attrition, he rebuilt the school which led to a dramatic increase in reading proficiency scores among other improvements.



He later was named principal of James Hillhouse High School. Here, he walked into a school without equity across classes especially in advanced placement with little structure to prepare students for college.

Staff did not feel a connection to administration. The culture was not conducive to learning.

Dr. Worthy was intent on developing a family atmosphere at the school. He walked the halls, and "spent time with kids in the hallway" to understand their needs. "Buy in from staff on the first day," is how he articulated his approach. He developed a leadership team which included the youth voice.

"Always approachable," is how he describes his style with the students and their families.

"Be ready for college atmosphere," is what Dr. Worthy sought to establish. He implemented more resources for college courses and re-instated the construction and automotive programs for youth who were not college bound in order to learn a trade. In partnership with Gateway

Community College, he developed a program for students to earn an associate degree as an x-ray or surgical technician.

"Education is the key for our kids to be successful," he stated. It is also the key to "break that cycle of poverty."



As principal, Dr. Worthy was also aware that some of his students were placed into justice facilities. "They did not have a good support system," he stated. The majority of these youth had gaps in their education, and they felt they were "not going to be successful in school." What Dr. Worthy believed these youth needed was actually more contact with adults in a smaller setting.

One particular youth made a lasting impression on him. A Freshman at Hillhouse had a reputation for fighting in the community and people were actually afraid of him. "He was one of the toughest kids I ever met," is how Dr. Worthy described him.

This youth eventually was incarcerated at Manson Youth Institution only to return to Hillhouse over a year later. At 16 years old, he had only achieved 3 credits when the 16 would have been the age-appropriate number. He was the typical "over age and under accredited" youth.

"I was invested in him and others like him," Dr. Worthy recalls.

With intensive support, but most importantly, a belief in what he was capable of, this youth graduated to community college.

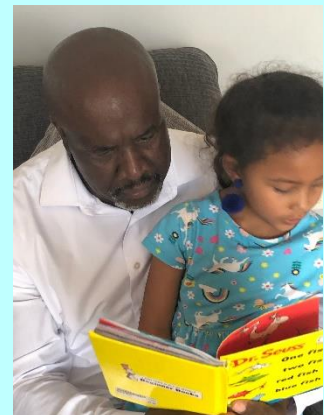
"Mr. Worthy, you are okay," the youth stated in a quiet moment with Dr. Worthy.

"The biggest achievement I have felt," is how Dr. Worthy reflects back his work as principal at Hillhouse.

When asked why he would accept a position DCF at this point in his career his response was clear. "It intrigued me," he stated. "I have a plan. We need to change the system for these kids to be successful."

Dr. Worthy has a vision for his new role - to ensure a quality education for each student in a justice facility.

One strategy is to implement universal screenings in math and reading and monitor progress of all students at the beginning, middle and end of placement in a facility. The results of the screening will then follow the youth to their next educational setting, but most importantly, will give us direction on how to support our students in their learning.



Professional development of staff is another important element as is data to document the successes of the programs as well as sharing best practices across the system.

"They are here. It is not a regular school," he indicated yet this should not allow anyone to have low expectations of what the youth are capable of achieving.

"The question is, how do I hold everyone accountable including myself," he stated.

Success is everyone's responsibility.

"How do I support you," he will constantly ask the students and staff.

Welcome Dr. Glen Worthy and best of luck!