

# Dunlap sup't. sets strategic planning course

## Dr. Jay Marino looking for "o-fees"

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New Dunlap schools Superintendent Dr. Jay Marino is a "data driven" school leader and scholar who is putting the school district and its community on a year-long strategic planning process.

"We will include teachers, students, parents as well as representatives from business, government and the community to participate," declares the 39-year-old school head, who comes to Dunlap with experience in teaching, technology, curriculum and measurement.

The strategic planning process kicks off August 17 with a district staff self assessment followed by a fall data retreat, among other activities, and ends in the spring of 2010 with school board review and the making of plans to "live the plan."

As part of the process, there will be online surveys, coffees, and community meetings, all aimed at finding out what the Dunlap schools community considers its education needs and expectations.

"What do we see coming in the next three to five years?" is a question Marino hopes to see answered by the strategic planners.

In the meantime, Marino plans to be looking for opportunities for improvement (o-fees).

### Marino has written book and articles

A native of Dubuque, Iowa, Marino has in less than two decades gained experience as an inner city elementary and middle school classroom teacher, school technology and curriculum director, and 8 years as deputy to the superintendents in the Rock Island and Cedar Rapids, Iowa, school districts.

The Dunlap superintendent was a key player on teams that won a Malcolm Baldrige Award for Cedar Rapids schools and an Illinois Lincoln Award while at Rock Island.

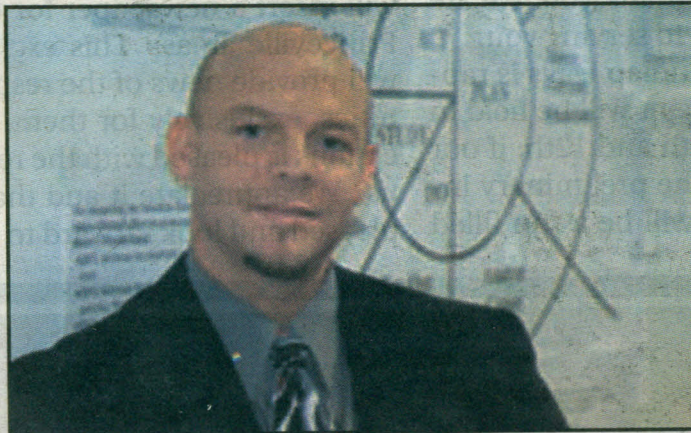
A devotee of Edward Deming, total quality management, and continuous improvement processes, Marino consults internationally on school improvement.

Marino earned his bachelor, master's and doctoral degrees from Northern Iowa, Ari-

zona State and Western Illinois universities, respectively.

He edited a book titled Quality across the Curriculum, published by the American Society for Quality in 2004, which provides a quality-based curriculum for teachers. Marino has also written articles such as "Boardroom to Classroom: Continuous Improvement in Cedar Rapids," for the School Administrator.

The superintendent and his wife Laura and family live in Peoria in the school district. They have four children: Jessica, 16; Joey, 14; Matthew, 3, and Grace, 1.



Dr. Jay Marino

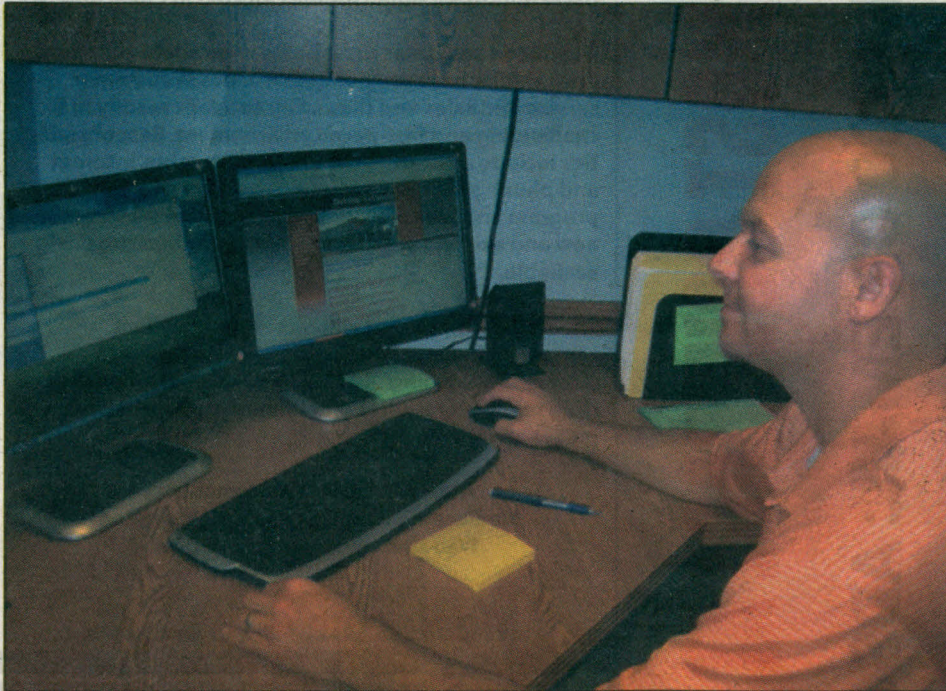
### "Continuous improvement" Marino's mantra

Marino believes in continuous, "in process" measurement throughout a school year.

# Dunlap Superintendent

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"We already take tests in classrooms throughout the year," explains Marino. He wants to help teams of teachers and staff identify measures that will show whether progress is being made toward educational objectives while they are teaching, rather than after the fact in end-of-year tests.



**Dr. Jay Marino, who calls himself "data driven," in front of his two-screen computer set-up in his office in the Dunlap School District Administrative Office.**

"Shared leadership" is another term that came more than once in our interview with Marino.

"Everyone plays a part in education," observes Marino. "If we can identify common goals and mutual values, then we can achieve them."

## *"Co-curricular" activities important*

When asked about the relative importance of academics and extra-curricular activities, Marino called the latter "co-curricular," saying that "extra" sounded apart and beyond education.

Instead, Marino sees co-curricular activities as great motivators of students to do well across the board in their educational experience.

While he considers academics of greater importance, "hands down," Marino sees academics and co-curricular activities "working together" in the educational enterprise.

Marino said his biggest initial challenge is to build relationships, get to know people and establish trust in the community.

The broad involvement Marino sees for the strategic planning process should help him get to know people.

## *Dunlap not your typical school district*

Most of Dr. Marino's recent experience has been with diverse urban school districts. Dunlap is somewhat diverse, but not typically so.

For the state of Illinois overall, 54 percent of students are white and 20 percent each are African-American and Hispanic, with 4 percent Asian-Americans.

Dunlap is 79 percent white, 6 percent African-American and Hispanic combined, with almost 12 percent being Asian Americans.

Whereas 41 percent of students statewide are low-income, only 5 percent of Dunlap's 3,350 students qualify for free and reduced price lunches.

Maybe surprisingly, Dunlap has per student operating expenditures that are significantly lower than that of the state as a whole, \$7,487 for Dunlap and \$9,907 statewide.

Dunlap's teachers and administrators are also paid less than the statewide averages.

Yet Dunlap shines when it comes to ACT test scores, at 24.2 overall versus the statewide average of 20.5.

Parental expectations are high at Dunlap. It sounds as if Dr. Jay Marino wants to ratchet them even higher.