

## Superintendent's Column No. 3 for May

Thank you ... I want to thank all of you who attended Thursday's Transforming Our Schools Summit.

The conversation has begun about the future of our schools and expanding creative opportunities for our students. There was a lot of give and take among the audience, students, teachers and parents who attended the Summit with not only the dozen panelists that participated but with each other.

Students from Frankfort Middle School, Keyser Middle School, Frankfort High School and Keyser High School participated in the Summit as ushers and assisted with the event. There was also a video in the beginning that featured some of the same students talking about their goals and dreams for the future and how they their school years are helping them reach those goals.

The students asked questions of the panel of community leaders who presented brief statements about the skill sets they believe students need to achieve success in life and careers. The panelists, in turn, asked the students questions about how they think their education is helping them. The discussions covered a lot of topics.

Panelist Dr. Wayne Spiggle talked to the students about what he believes it takes to be successful in life. He pointed out that, according to psychologists, the driving force for all is the desire to be happy.

He suggested there are specific pathways to happiness. They include living in the absence of poverty, being healthy, experiencing the dignity of work, belonging to mutually supportive families and groups, feeling worthwhile and loved by contributing to the greater good, enjoying our culture, and having a hopeful relationship with God. He pointed out, however, that not all who live in our community have full access to these pathways.

Having gotten the attention of the students who were present, he pointed out that the skill sets that a high school graduate should have should result in four areas of expertise.

These include the ability to think independently and critically; experience in communication, collaboration, and participation with others; having the desire to

be self-motivated toward life-long learning; and being aware that we are all connected and have responsibilities toward one another.

I had suggested to the panelists that they read the book “Deeper Learning,” by Monica Martinez and Dennis McGrath, to help them understand what some of our goals for our schools and students might be.

Dr. Spiggle told the audience he read the book but before he had done so, he said he had no idea that other schools are involved in strategies that avoid “teaching to the test” and “top down education” but instead transform their schools from institutions into places where students and teachers create families by collaborating with one another in the effort.

“Think about a school where students take responsibility in helping each other to learn and to live together in harmony. Think about schools where every student and every faculty member can make a difference in each other’s lives,” Dr. Spiggle said.

He then asked students what they thought of mentoring, not only by adults but by older students mentoring younger ones and helping each other on the pathways.

Several of the students indicated they thought it would be a good idea, especially for those going from the middle school to the high school to be mentored by the older students.

Dr. Leonard Colelli, president of Potomac State College and one of the panelists, pointed out that it is also a good idea for students starting their freshman year in college as well to have a mentor to help them learn the pitfalls on their way to their goal in higher education, which is graduation. He said mentors can help students to be successful.

Delegate Gary Howell, representing the Mineral County District in the West Virginia House of Delegates, and also a panelist, told the students that mentoring is part of the Legislature system. He said that when a freshman legislator comes to Charleston they are mentored by those who have had the experience of lawmaking. He also pointed out that Legislators come in a vast range of ages and experiences in life which broadens the mentor process.

We would have liked to have had more parents and businesses represented in the audience, but we realize this time of year schedules fill quickly. However, we hope those who missed the Summit event will join us for upcoming meetings and events in which you are invited to participate so that we may continue to expand opportunities for students.

The conversation has started. Don't you want to join in?

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