November, 2019

Superintendent Corner

As I reflect upon a thirty year career, I find that some criticisms of public education have not changed and in many cases, were never valid. One such criticism is workforce skill development. The criticism goes like this...“schools are not producing workers with the skills necessary to fill the demands of workplace.” Often, this criticism would be levied by the same folks who decry the overall lack of change to the “look” of public education. Is it the singular purpose of our nation’s schools to fully prepare workers for future jobs?

My answer to this question is No! Public schools are far more than compulsory settings to teach the skills necessary to succeed in the world of work! Our school district and public schools throughout the country are seeking to prepare citizens who can successfully navigate their roles and responsibilities as members of a community, a state, a nation and an interconnected world. What skills are critical to be a global citizen? How are public schools doing preparing graduates to be able to decide and succeed at the next steps in their education and career development?

To be a successful global citizen, our school and other public schools endeavor to teach, through a broad and in-depth approach, literacy skills, numeracy skills, metacognitive skills, and social emotional skills. Our graduates should have strong reading, writing, listening and speaking skills; our graduates should be competent with quantitative and statistical skills; our graduates should be able to process complex information, analyze data and be able to research information and discern good from bad research. Our graduates should possess the understanding of how to use multiple methods to acquire and learn new skills and information; finally, our graduates should understand how to negotiate, show empathy, collaborate, and seek communal and global wellness. Our educational program seeks to teach these skills and more within a broad and in-depth curriculum of courses and school experiences.

I believe that our academic program is seeking to teach these skills and to the extent that these skills allow our graduates to enter and succeed as global citizens, our job is well done. Many of the jobs that our graduates will perform have not been invented and will continue to be impacted by urbanization, technology and globalization. Therefore, I reject the criticism that we are failing to prepare the future workforce. I do not believe it is the singular job of public education to prepare the workforce of tomorrow with the specific skills they will need to succeed in job A or job B; rather, it is our job to teach a broad set of adaptable skills and qualities that will contribute to the development of successful citizens who will support the future needs of our community, our state, our nation and our world.