

Community engagement improves the quality of schools

- Aug 13, 2019

To The Daily Sun,

Greetings to everyone in the Laconia School Community,

What an exciting night it was on July 31! 120 members of our Laconia School Community gathered at the Meredith Center Culinary Arts Center in the Huot Technical Center to participate in a conversation about a Portrait of a Graduate. The diverse group included parents, grandparents, students, educators, members of local community organizations, school board members, city officials, and city residents who wanted to be a part of the conversation about what should be the focus of teaching and learning in our schools.

The high level of engagement, and the energy and excitement produced at this event is yet another example of how this city comes together to support schools and to make our community a better place. Guided by the excellent facilitation of Carolyn Eastman from the New Hampshire Learning Initiative, the conversation centered on what it means to be successful in school and to be college-, career-, community-, and life-ready. This process will help us reach our goal of creating a Laconia schools, PreK to 12 Portrait of a Graduate.

This forum was a continuation of a process to create a collective vision that will guide our work in the Laconia schools. Getting student feedback will be important. As practitioners in the classroom and experts in their respective field of learning, our teachers will need time to align curriculum, instruction, and assessment to the Portrait of

a Graduate. The School District is looking for community members to join some of our educators on a Portrait of a Graduate this year to help lead this work in our schools. There is significant amount of work to do, but preparing our students for success in school and beyond is the right work.

In his book "Schools Cannot Do It Alone" (2010), Jamie Vollmer writes about the importance of community engagement to support schools and the students in them. The Laconia Portrait of a Graduate Community Forum was a testament to the fact that, as support our children, we continue to improve the quality of education in our schools, and ultimately our community as well.

As I left the meeting, I felt fully energized and excited about this work. All I can think of was, "We are Laconia Strong!"

With sincere gratitude,

Steve Tucker