

Girls Talk about the Future of Public Schools

July 29, 2008 - Rapid City, South Dakota
South Dakota Issues Forums

Ten girls from the Girls Inc. program, fifth through eighth grade, participated in a What is the 21st Century Mission for our Public Schools? forum on July 29. A first-time event for the girls, they were open and willing to share their experiences and opinions.

Approach One – Prepare Students to Be Successful in the Workplace

Technology investment was thought unlikely, at least for laptops for each student's use, due to the unlikelihood that parents would want to pay more taxes to provide them. Though technology may make for more efficiency and increase learning they said, the students felt the monetary cost would be too high.

Listening to each other, a few students who thought funding for preschool programs could be better used elsewhere heard others say that attending preschool prepares children for kindergarten and helps them learn to interact with others.

The role of business/employers should be one of corporate giving to schools. One student talked about a classmate whose family could not afford to purchase a calculator required for class.

Approach Two – Prepare Students to Be Active and Responsible Citizens

Learning about government and history would help citizens be knowledgeable and involved, creating the sense of shared responsibility that Approach Two promotes the girls said, but the focus seemed too limited for our public schools. Voting is an option, not something each citizen is required to do, thought several of the girls, but not voting negates the right to complain. Communities would become better with more citizen involvement and issues would be fewer.

They also believed learning about other cultures makes for a more educated populace. This also benefits future job seekers and travelers.

Approach Three – Help Students Discover and Develop Their Talents

South Dakota does not have enough teachers to either reduce class size or open magnet schools. In either case, taxes would be increased felt the students. Individual talents and passions can be pursued either outside of school time, or through a college degree. And, "What if a person's interest changes?" asked one girl.

A school in Rapid City focusing on Lakota culture would inform Lakota students and help preserve their culture. This was the only focus of a magnet school the girls thought worthwhile.

These girls, who have no agenda, and who are students in local schools, thought that Approach One, Prepare Students to Be Successful in the Workplace, would most closely provide young people with a well-rounded education, something the girls felt was most important for an individual's future.

Participation in this forum strengthened the girls understanding of legislative processes. Copies of How Our Laws are Made, a Chiesman Center publication, were donated to the Girls Inc. program. Girls Inc. of Rapid City is a program of Youth & Family Services. Founded in 1965, they provide fun and exciting educational and recreational activities during the school year and each weekday during the summer. Girls Incorporated[®] of Rapid City's mission is to inspire all girls to be strong, smart, and bold.

