

“As Mr. Seas It for ACOVSD High School Graduates”

On May 19, 20, and 21, West Union High School, North Adams High School, and Peebles High School, respectively, will participate in commencement exercises. Congratulations to our graduates, their parents, family members, and the Adams County Ohio Valley School District for demonstrating and providing the care, compassion, and the support necessary to graduate from high school. Our students as the Class of 2017 have represented themselves and our school/community admirably.

As Superintendent for the ACOVSD, I am grateful for the milestone that our students have met. However, I can't help but wonder, perhaps worry a bit, about whether or not we as a school/community have prepared our graduates for life outside the walls of our schools. Do our graduates have the academic preparation to attend a post-secondary institution and continue their education? Do our graduates have the skill necessary to enter into the workforce, maintain a job, and support themselves? Exactly where will our graduates find meaningful employment? In order for me to make better sense out of my surroundings, the culture of Adams County, and answer some of the questions that I just asked, I have deliberately taken the time to speak with many people throughout Adams County, attend workshops, and read several articles and books to better understand the beauty as well as the challenges of the Appalachian culture. Recently, I just completed a book called “Hillbilly Elegy” written by J.D. Vance. J.D. Vance authors his memoir of a family and culture in crisis. J.D. writes that “Hillbilly Elegy” is a passionate and personal crisis---that of poor, white Americans. The Vance family story began with hope in post-war America. J.D.'s grandparents were dirt poor and in love and moved from Kentucky's Appalachia region to Ohio in the hopes of escaping the dreadful poverty around them. They raised a middle-class family, and eventually one of their grandchildren would serve in the Marine Corp., graduate from Ohio State, and graduate from Yale Law School. As J.D. discusses his trial and tribulations living in Appalachia and eventually graduating from Yale Law School, so will be the case for some, but not enough of our Adams County students who will successfully enter the workforce or attend and graduate from college.

As a school superintendent and member of the Adams County School/Community, my hope is that while we embrace the rich tradition and history of our Appalachian culture, we recognize the need to increase the importance of education and provide our students with unlimited opportunities for success. Congratulations to the Class of 2017!