

SETTING THE RECORD STRAIGHT

A couple of weeks ago, the *Associated Press* (AP) released a story on various schools across the United States regarding the graduation/drop-out rates. In Ohio, this story was covered by various television and radio stations, along with many of the major newspapers. To make a long story short, the authors of this information, who were from John Hopkins University in Maryland, looked at some data, made an inaccurate interpretation (at least about our school district), and dubbed many schools as “drop-out factories.”

I am not going to suggest to you that the good people who were interpreting this data at JHU did so incorrectly. What I am suggesting to you is that the authors/researchers should have done more investigating. If they had done so, they might have discovered that there is a critical factor involved here that the researchers overlooked. We have quite a number of our juniors and seniors who attend the Ohio Valley Career and Technical Center their final two years of high school. What does this have to do with anything? If you look at any of our high school enrollments by grade level, there is always a significant drop in enrollment following the tenth grade or sophomore year. The biggest reason for this drop-off in the junior year is related to the number of students who leave the home high school to attend the CTC. So, you see, it wasn't that the researchers looked at their numbers incorrectly. They just didn't have all of the vital information that they needed.

To me, this is precisely where irresponsible or sensational journalism is to blame. This inaccurate information was released all over the country by the AP. Many a school or district such as ours has had its reputation unfairly tarnished. This could have certainly been prevented had someone somewhere picked up the telephone and attempted to verify the information with school districts before releasing the story. Not only that, but consider the possible long-term economic implications for those districts that were wrongly labeled as “drop-out factories.”

We, the Adams County/Ohio Valley School District, have attempted to get to the bottom of this by calling the AP Bureau in Columbus and E-mailing various representatives at JHU in Maryland. To date, we have been relatively unsuccessful. I have seen no retraction in the media to date from either the *Associated Press* or John Hopkins University. Surely, there has to be some sort of justice for this outrage somewhere beyond a half sincere “I’m sorry” on the telephone. To their credit, as of Friday, November 9th, the researchers at JHU have now conceded to district officials that the AC/OVSD was mistakenly put on this notorious list due to lack of understanding of the data. That’s fine, but I still hope to see a retraction by the AP in the near future. After all, the damage by that AP story has already been done. Many thanks to the staff at *The People’s Defender* for their follow-up story on this inaccurate report.

This is one educator who is fed up with all of the pot shots and finger pointing at our public schools. As I have stated before, when we make mistakes, we should be held accountable for them. When we find ourselves with individuals unable to successfully

perform their duties, we should assist them in seeking a new occupation. However, it seems to me that there is a concerted effort in our country to expound on anything and everything that is wrong with public schools in an apparent effort to destroy this fabric of our very history. Everyone knows how to do our jobs better than we do, yet very few of those who point their fingers at public schools have ever really worked in a public school. Still, our country seems to be so sure that the privatization of public education is the way to move forward.

I am proud of our staffs and all of the hard work that they do against the odds in the name of leaving no child behind. I am proud of our students and parents who are striving for better schools by working together instead of pointing fingers for any and every shortcoming. I am proud of our county and our taxpayers who have joined all of us to form one team whose mission is to become an “Excellent” school district. Our graduation/drop-out data proves that the AC/OVSD is not a “drop-out factory.” We have all been unjustly insulted and embarrassed by this incident.

THANK YOU, VETERANS!

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of our veterans for their service to our country, and for their ongoing service to our schools and communities. They help us out every year with multiple school-related Veterans’ Day Programs, and they always do a terrific job. Our Central Administration Office staff assisted me in covering all our Veterans’ Day Assemblies, and were all touched by the quality of each of the programs.

Again, many, many thanks to our veterans, as well as to those in our schools who were responsible for organizing the Veterans' Day Observances.

THANKSGIVING BREAK

Thanksgiving Break is upon us. Schools will be closed from November 21st (today) through November 26th. Classes will resume on Tuesday, November 28th. On behalf of the AC/OVSD, a happy and safe Thanksgiving is wished for all.

Charles P. Kimble

Superintendent