

Continue focusing on students, Dubuque

By Stan Rheingans, Superintendent of Schools

Yesterday, another senior class walked across the graduation stage at Dalzell Field and became graduates of Hempstead High School and Dubuque Senior High School or, more broadly, of the Dubuque Community School District.

These students are the very reason public schools exist.

As a public school district, Dubuque Community Schools proudly serves each and every student who walks through our doors – regardless of race, religion, gender, language, socio-economic status and disability.

Today, they begin the next part of their journey.

This year, the impact of graduation sits differently for me personally as it was my last as superintendent of the Dubuque Community School District.

As I reflect on the past decade, one that has been a privilege of my career, I leave you with both a deep thank you and a future request.

First, to the tireless educators of the Dubuque Community Schools for your exceptional skill, drive, compassion, teamwork and unwavering support for students and families.

To be clear, my definition of educator is a broad one that includes every single staff member serving our students in and out of the classroom. I have learned from each of you daily and the students and families you serve each day are fortunate to have your expertise and support.

To our students, thank you for your positive outlook on the world, your perseverance and your sense of unitedness. Your generation is smarter, stronger and more committed than some wish to give you credit for. Please continue to push for greatness – our world is in good hands with you as our future.

To our parents and families, thank you for entrusting us with the gift of educating your children. I encourage you to continue partnering with the district – working together is the best way to help our students find their individual success.

To our community, thank you for embracing a strong education as the foundation of our community. It has been abundantly clear in my tenure as superintendent that many districts and communities do not enjoy the same strong partnerships we have in Dubuque. Embrace the success that comes in working together on behalf of students, remembering that our goals are the same and collectively we achieve more.

Finally, I leave you with a simple but critically important request: Please, never let our education system get swept up in partisan politics or our current polarized societal climate.

The national rhetoric in our world today seeks to pit sides against each other on most issues, including education. People are quick to dig-in on their position rather than seek common ground.

Surely, we haven't been perfect over the last decade. We faced many challenges, had many successes and made our share of mistakes.

Regardless of the circumstances, though, our School Board, district and community have long succeeded because we have resisted being drawn into these partisan conflicts and national narrative about education. We have succeeded because even when viewpoints don't align, we come to resolution respectfully, collaboratively and by always putting students first.

I am confident that the Dubuque Community School District has the right leadership, teachers, staff and community support to continue its strong progress forward. There is much work to be done, but if we look to the past as a guide to the future, the district will find its greatest future success by continuing its long history of openness to tackling difficult issues and remaining squarely focused on making decisions that are best for students.

When my family came to Dubuque in 2004, we didn't know how deep our roots would be planted. We are thankful to call Dubuque home and are grateful for the outstanding education our students have and are receiving in the Dubuque Community School District.

As I end my tenure in the Dubuque Community School District, my deepest thank you for your support.