

Germantown School District
Education Summit 3.0
March 4, 2017
Summary

Eighty-seven people representing parents, students, teachers, school board members, community members, and administrators gathered on Saturday, March 4, 2017 for the Germantown School District Education Summit 3.0. The day was spent thinking together about the kind of learning that will best prepare students for the realities, challenges, and opportunities they will encounter in life after they leave school.

The day began with a recap of the District Initiative work over the past three years including a concise definition: “Building a foundation for success within every child.” This was seen as the mechanism for teaching students the district’s Essential Success Factors - 1) HOW to learn, 2) How to COLLABORATE, 3) To KNOW THEMSELVES - and the means by which the district would be able to enact its mission to “Empower and Inspire Every Student to Success.”

A discussion took place on the importance of fostering a Growth Mindset (as defined by Carol Dweck’s research) as a key component in building that foundation for success. When students understand the mindset that is needed to maximize their learning and success potential, and when they learn what they can do to develop that mindset, they are empowered in their abilities as learners. The goal is for every teacher to intentionally foster a Growth Mindset in every student, in every class, every year, and to engage parents in doing the same.

Next, an exploration into the future conditions in which students will find themselves living and working took place. Given that an important goal of the general public for its investment in the education of its children is to develop in them the life-skills they need to be productive and positively contributing members of society when they are adults, understanding the new realities and conditions in which they will live and work is important for schools to consider. After taking a look at the incredible pace of change going on in the world since the end of the Industrial Age and the launch of the Information or Digital Age in the 1970’s with the advent of the personal computer – especially since 2007 with the exponential growth in computer processing power and their effect on social technologies – participants heard directly from a panel of local business representatives on how these changes have affected what competencies and dispositions students need to be prepared for the new realities in the world of work.

The afternoon was spent exploring the concept of “Powerful Learning,” or the kinds of learning experiences that can develop in students the success skills and dispositions that will benefit them the most in their future. It was acknowledged that students need to be competent readers, writers, mathematicians, and thinkers, and that they need to know about and understand the central concepts of the physical, technological, and social sciences. It is also important for them to learn about all the different options available in all course offerings throughout their school career. Through Powerful Learning, the teaching of the regular content of school in all classes grades K-12 can be designed in a way that ignites students’ curiosity and wonder, helps them discover pathways of interest through their unique strengths and natural capabilities, and engages them in deep, reflective and relevant learning. Powerful Learning will develop in students a Growth Mindset where students will pursue continuous learning as a life goal, develop the perseverance to handle challenges and set-backs, and see effort and hard work as key to growing one’s intelligence and capabilities. Powerful Learning also intentionally develops in students the skills they need to collaborate effectively with others. Ultimately, Powerful Learning engages students in the process and power of striving for excellence and ethics in learning, working, relating, serving, and leading as it transforms each individual student into the possibility of realizing his or her true potential in life.

The Summit set the stage for all subsequent district goals and work to develop teacher and system capacity for the design and delivery of Powerful Learning experiences for students. The goal is that students will be better prepared with the knowledge, skills, dispositions, and integrity needed to be successful at everything they will be required to do in life, and they will be empowered and equipped with the capabilities needed to be successful at whatever they choose to pursue on life’s personal journey.