

Education

In today's knowledge-based economy, it is vital to recognize that learning is a lifelong pursuit. While every citizen needs to have a basic education, the days are gone when one would join the work force after obtaining a diploma and continue in the same career until retirement. It is vital that we ensure both that our children receive a good educational foundation and that our workforce has access to updated training opportunities throughout life.

In Kershaw County, we are fortunate to have an exceptionally good public school system. Not only does it provide our students with a well-rounded and practical education to prepare them for life, but it is innovative in its approach.

Whenever I have an opportunity to discuss the educational system with persons from other parts of South Carolina, or from outside the state, I proudly point to Kershaw County's leadership in incorporating computer technology in its approach to learning. Whereas other school districts have followed suit, our school system was the first in the state to ensure that every student would receive a laptop computer in the 9th grade, to use throughout high school.

Our Applied Technology Center (ATEC) is another shining example of Kershaw County's ability to provide top quality education and training to its citizens. Its commitment to keeping up with current needs of local industries makes our community one of the most desirable places in the region to open or expand a business.

Public education is the bedrock of our society. Without that foundation, we have little hope for success in any other activities we collectively try to undertake. The public school system acts as a mirror of any community – one that prospective residents and investors will use to determine whether or not to establish a home, business, or industry there. As such, all citizens of the community have a vested interest in making sure that the public schools are as successful as they can be.

Moreover, we must give proper recognition to our teachers, and support them in their efforts to prepare students for success in a world that seems to change at an ever-increasing rate. Teachers are true professionals who must always be updating their own skills and education, as they simultaneously work to pass a love of learning along to their pupils.

I'm sure each and every one of us can point to a teacher – or more likely to several – who challenged, encouraged, and inspired us to pursue our dreams. Whether we took their counsel or not, we know that we were blessed that they

made the effort. One of the best ways we can pay honor to our own role models and mentors is to support each new generation of teachers who follow in their footsteps.

The democratic principles that form the heart and soul of our nation require that all citizens be given an equal opportunity to succeed and prosper. That value is expressed in no better way than in the public school system. Our challenge as a society will always be to ensure that all children, regardless of the circumstances of their lives, are given access to a quality public education.

© 2006, Laurie S. Funderburk. All rights reserved.

www.lauriefunderburk.com