



JESSICA OSBORNE/MOORESVILLE TRIBUNE

Gov. Pat McCrory (right) and Mooresville Graded School District Superintendent Mark Edwards engage in a roundtable discussion during Thursday's Career Bridge Seminar at the Charles Mack Citizen Center.

BRIDGING EDUCATION, COMMERCE

Governor addresses
MGSD's career summit

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Despite a fast-approaching winter storm, some 650 people packed the Charles Mack Citizen Center in downtown Mooresville Thursday night to hear Gov. Pat McCrory and participate in the Mooresville Graded School District's fifth annual Career Bridge Seminar.

Most of the crowd consisted of Mooresville High School and Mooresville Middle School students and parents, seeking to gain information from the event titled "Bridging the Gap: Life After High School."

McCrory's comments became more of a roundtable discussion with MGSD Superintendent Mark Edwards,

who told the governor "It's a tremendous honor to have you join us." After their discussion, students and parents were able to participate in several breakout career sessions focusing on advanced manufacturing and training opportunities, athletic scholarship opportunities, financial aid and



PHOTO COURTESY OF CHRISTINA NUSS

Ashley Rabuck, a student in the Digital Media Advanced Studies class at Mooresville High School, interviews McCrory on Thursday for the MNN cable channel show, "Blue Devil Update."

Summit

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scholarships, and what employers want.

But the highlight of the evening was McCrory's appearance.

It began with Edwards asking McCrory to talk about the importance of vocational education. McCrory noted there are many trade businesses with open positions, but they can't fill them.

"There's a disconnect between education and commerce, and we're doing everything we can to bring education and commerce together," he said. "(Businesses) need people with these (trade) skills."

He noted that many people in the trade industries often make more money than someone who may have chosen another career path, such as becoming a lawyer. He also said students have many choices when it comes to education, and that vocational education can be just as tough as a college career path.

"It's exciting, but it can be competitive," he said.

Skill sets

Edwards then asked the governor what are some skills as a governor that you look for in a person entering the business world?

Answered McCrory, "Working in a team situation, rather than being isolated."

"I recently went to visit Google, and everyone is in teams working together, and succeed or fail together much like a basketball or football team would, and they all rely on each other," he said. "Team situations are extremely important, because you can determine what roles people will play and point out their strengths. You also find out what the group's weaknesses are and help each other."

"The second thing that I look for is problem solvers. I don't surround myself with people who will tell me what the problem is, but present solutions and several options to the problem, and know the importance of options."

Another key skill McCrory noted as being important is learning to communicate — not just vocally but through writing.

Holding up his cell phone he said, "This is probably one of the greatest inventions and the worst in some ways, because you're no longer talking and communicating and not typing but 5-10 words."

"If you can't write, you're not going to last long," he said.

Edwards noted that even "old fashion successes" such as being on time and working hard, and being dependable are still important today as students go out to get a job.

"By doing the best they can everyday and being dependable and working hard a lot of things can happen just by that effort," he said.



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Iredell County Board of Commissioners chairman Steve Johnson (right) poses a question to Gov. Pat McCrory (center) after the summit.

Among other things, McCrory said workers who don't have ethical standards won't survive.

"From the moment you meet someone you can determine if they can or cannot be trusted," he said. "Everywhere I go people are (usually) filming me, and if not I answer and act as if I'm being filmed or would read about it in the newspaper."

McCrory also warned students about the consequences of drug and alcohol use. "It will mess up your life," he said. "Don't be stupid and fall for peer pressure. I have a lot of friends and even colleagues who are not around because of it."

Teacher pay

One of the state's hot-button issues — teacher salaries — was bound to be broached with McCrory, and Edwards did so.

The governor said that because teachers have not received a significant pay raise in several years, North Carolina is not a major player in getting the best teachers.

"We don't want to be a starting point for our teachers to move on elsewhere," he said. "I'm being provided options right now on ways to do this and we'll look at longer-term concepts. My first priority and the legislature's, too, is to continue to get every teacher (who makes) less than \$35,000 in North Carolina a raise."

"The next (budget) goal would help all teachers get a pay raise, but we'll have to wait to find out how much Medicaid will cost and we don't know what our revenues are. We'll know more in the next month to two months."

"Our first goal is to help raise the base pay, otherwise we're going to lose (those teachers)."

McCrory noted even pay increases for other state employees needs to be addressed.

Other education goals

McCrory said he also plans to address the four silos of education in North Carolina from pre-K up to the university system.

"All of these systems are coming to me saying they are important and need help," he said. "So I decided to something during my first month in office and make one education plan because there's got to be a partnership, and look for ways to share resources, teachers, technology, and students."

Even though there is a limited amount of money, the goal is to have an educational vision that coincides with an economic development vision, and look

at the broader picture."

McCrory even suggested letting teachers just teach again, aside from the constant stream of tests.

"There are so many tests now," he said. "Not only are students tested, but teachers are tested, and schools are tested."

Edwards noted that a student in the district said the MGSD's motto should be changed from "every child, every day" to "test every child, everyday."

"We've got to mitigate (testing), but decide on the best way to do it," the superintendent said.

McCrory agreed there have been mistakes made regarding education at the state level.

"We need to give what's best for each district, whether its flexibility or teacher pay raises," he said. "It is important to measure students, and we hear a lot of complaints about testing, but don't take it for granted because it can change just like that."

"Next year is a totally different year with new changes. North Carolina was booming for so long that I think many people took those successes for granted, and they should never be taken for granted."

After the round table discussion came to a close, the breakout sessions began. They included two middle school sessions regarding an introduction to Naviance, and a presentation about NF Woods school to give both middle school students and parents a better understanding of opportunities available for all students upon entering high school.

McCrory also stayed briefly to speak with Mooresville and Iredell County government and schools officials, asking them what the issues are here. County Commission Chairman Steve Johnson and Mooresville Commissioner Mac Herring touched on rezoning issues surrounding properties or tracts of land, among other things.

McCrory then dropped in on a few of the breakout sessions to hear about the topics being discussed.

The annual Career Bridge Seminar is designed to provide students, parents, and community members with information related to high school course offerings, job shadowing, internships, and apprenticeship opportunities, information about the Career and Technical Education Program, as well as post secondary opportunities after high school and post secondary education and financial assistance.