

TRANSCRIPT

Context Setting and Superintendent Introduction

SPEAKER	Sydnee Dickson Interim Deputy Superintendent State of Utah
EVENT TITLE	<i>Every Day Counts Policy Forum: Developing Utah Solutions to Increase Attendance and Improve Student Outcomes</i>
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ANN WHITE

So without further ado, I'm very pleased to introduce my new ... my colleague. She is currently the new Interim Director ... excuse me, the Interim Deputy Superintendent for the state of Utah, Sydnee Dickson. Dr. Sydnee Dickson comes to us with a wealth of educational experience. She was a teacher, she was a high school counselor, she was a principal. She has been working in professional development for teachers for a number of years. She came to Utah State Office of Education, lucky us. And in that role she has been working with licensing in professional development. She was the teaching and learning director, and now she's currently our Interim Deputy Superintendent. So I would like to turn the time over to Syd.

[Applause]

SYDNEE DICKSON

Well, good morning, and greetings from the Interim State Office of Education; feels a little bit like that. I want to acknowledge the work of former Superintendent Martell Menlove, who had such a personal interest in the issue of chronic absenteeism. And it's something that he was really focused on, looking at the research—more recent research—and really wondering why we don't talk about this issue more often. We've all perhaps worked in settings where it's come up; I know I've served on a few boards where we talk about it in afterschool networks, we talk about it in schools. But collectively, as a community, we don't often focus on this larger issue with strategies to come together. And it really does take all of us to ensure that all of our students are highly successful and that they all have opportunities for success.

So I'm very excited about this opportunity—that we're all here together from varying agencies and varying roles to talk about and think about strategies that help us come together to solve this problem. As a former high school counselor and administrator, I certainly saw it at the secondary level. And then stopped to think about how it's starting to impact us, at not only a high school level, but at the elementary level, and now out of the ... Chicago, I think it's University of Chicago that's done some recent research on looking at chronic absenteeism even at the preschool level. So we have our work cut out for us, and I do believe it takes all of us.

I'm proud to introduce to you a great mentor and friend who is part of the interim work at the state office of education. Our new Interim Superintendent is Joel Coleman, and many of you know him, and you have a little brief bio in your packet on him. But I would just add to that—that he has a degree from the University of Utah and master's degree of public administration from BYU, so he's an equal offender. He really—he looks very young in spite of his salt and pepper hair, but he does have 23 years of experience so he really comes to us with a wealth of experience. And that experience is really about civic engagement, public involvement. And he's been very invested in public schools for a long time—all of his five children have either attended public schools or are currently attending. And he also is a founder and trustee of Monticello Academy, a Utah charter school.

I could go on about all of his academic background and accolades, but two of the most important things that I have found about Joel in working with him over the last couple of years: First and foremost, he's really dedicated to ensuring that each and every student has a quality education and that they find success in life; he's passionate about that. And then even as equally important, he's just a really great guy. I loved working with him and interacting with him on a daily basis. I know Joel would ... the two of us would want to take a moment just to give a shout-out to those who have put so much time and investment into ensuring that today is a success, and it's not just about today, but it's the work that goes on after today, and all those things that occurred before today. So I'd just specially like to thank Ann White, and Kenwyn Derby from REL West, and from our office, and those who have supported them. So if you're in the audience and you've had a part in today's event, could you please stand and be acknowledged.

[Applause]

SYDNEE DICKSON

Thank you so much, the committee. We know these things don't happen overnight; it's been in the planning for a very long time, and well executed, so thank you so much.