

The Gettysburg Adams Chamber of Commerce and Adams County Economic Education Foundation co-hosted the Business Education Summit last month. Its purpose was to introduce business leaders to the challenges faced by educators in preparing our future workforce and to acquaint school administrators with the workforce needs of local businesses.

No matter where you stand on the Keystone Exams and the need for teachers to “teach to the test,” one fact remains: students need additional support when it comes to being the best prepared they can be in becoming our future employees. We can continue to place blame, or we can work together to make great things happen.

Dr. Larry Redding, Gettysburg Area School District, kicked off the event with a State of Education presentation, then Representative Will Tallman set the stage for the summit.

Five small group roundtables were formed with representatives from our local school districts and top employers. With the help of trained facilitators, groups brainstormed and prioritized needs and walked away from the event with action plans to begin addressing at least one major need per district.

Some of the next steps that came out of the summit:

- To better understand the skills needed by local businesses, one district will develop a Business Advisory Group that will meet on a regular basis to address the skills gap.
- A business offered to come to schools to conduct mock interviews with students.
- Another district is conducting a survey of local businesses to determine the interest in and availability of job shadowing opportunities. The school will also develop a list of business leaders to talk to classes.
- One district is hosting a tour of their facilities for district leaders to see first-hand the type of equipment students are learning on, which may be outdated in some industry standards.

In the end, the summit showed the need for business and industry representatives to become more active participants in the education process. Educators are open to this prospect and our communities will be better for it. Having a prepared and skilled workforce will help with the retention of our businesses and support the recruitment of new businesses to Adams County in commercial growth areas.