



Community

Global hosts teachers summit

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Western Governors University held a summit for Texas teachers Saturday at Global High School in Waxahachie with about 40 online students from across the state in attendance.



WGU is an online university and this summit, "Creating Connections," was the first one ever held. Its purpose was to allow WGU students, graduates, instructors and the Texas Advisory Board to meet in person, some for the first time, and to interact with one another while learning things that will help them find a job and when they are in the classroom.

Waxahachie resident Dr. Jennifer Smolka coordinated the event. She is the K-12 regional coordinator for the State of Texas Teachers College, Western Governors University. Waxahachie ISD human resources executive director Rick Rodriguez assisted in the coordination of the event. He and former WISD Superintendent Dr. Bobby Parker are on Smolka's advisory board.

Smolka has been with WGU for five years and as the mother of four sons enjoys her job that allows her to work from home and to be active in the PTO at Dunaway Elementary School and to serve on the Waxahachie Education Foundation.

The keynote speaker for the summit was Thomas J. Crowe, superintendent of McKinney ISD.

Crowe gave a presentation of "The Ten Things I Wish They Had Told Me in Education Classes — plus two." Those reasons are:

10.) Mom and Dad are sending you their best children (they aren't keeping the "good one" at home and sending you the "bad one.")

9). You manage discipline through instruction, not instruction through discipline.

8). Kids don't care what you know until they know you care.

7). There is a difference between building a relationship and being a student's "friend." Students don't need an adult friend.

6). They are all our kids. Some of them are a little bruised, some are carrying things in their backpacks that we don't understand, but they are all our kids.

5). Never say never. You are the last hope for many children so you must find a way to help your student be successful.

4). Sometimes school is the very best refuge that students have. And not all of them in this situation are economically disadvantaged.

3). The real learning about the craft begins after college.

2). Education is mandated, learning is optional. (1) Until you have your own kids you will not fully understand that parent gene that sometimes makes parents act stupid when dealing with issues related to their own children.

1-plus). You will not work eight hours a day — ever. You will not have a summer off — ever.

After Crowe's inspiring presentation, the students went to various workshops to learn what to do next after they graduate.

The workshops included how to fill out a job application, how to prepare a resume and how to successfully hunt for a job and be successful during an interview.

Other workshops included instruction in special education guidelines, and pre-clinical experiences to prepare the students for the teaching job.

The students were provided with materials that will help them in many areas as they prepare to be in the classroom. Job fair listings were also given during the summit.

Rodriguez credited Smolka for being the link to the students and for providing them with the information they need regarding special education accommodations, classroom management and guidelines regarding least restrictive environment.

"Dr. Smolka is the driving force behind the success of this summit. Her energy keeps us going," he said.

"Online classes are made up of students that have never met. The average age of the students here today is 38 and this will give them an opportunity to network with one another," she said. "This summit is about helping the transition from graduation to the job."

With so many graduates wanting to be in the elementary level of education, there are often few openings and this summit allowed the faculty members to speak about going into secondary education levels.

Terri Morton of Waxahachie was one of the summit attendees. "This is my second year of study at WGU. I am studying elementary education. It is exciting to meet people in person. We do have chat rooms and forums, but this is nice. I e-mail Dr. Smolka all the time and it is really nice to meet her face to face.

"This summit gives me a lot of information I need and it is a good way to network with other people," Morton said.

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