



SCALE

Scott County Association For Leadership And Efficiency

By the sound and length of the conversation started by last Friday's SCALE meeting, attendees were engaged in and enthusiastic about learning more about "Preparing Students for the Workplace in Scott County"! After a brief discussion about last Saturday's Grand Opening Celebration for the Spring Lake Regional Park (led by County Parks Manager **Mark Themig**), SCALE Chair **LuAnne Lemke** (Louisville Township) handed the meeting over to a panel of distinguished education professionals.

Led by Prior Lake-Savage Schools Superintendent **Sue Ann Gruver**, the panelists didn't shy away from raising difficult issues and bringing up significant challenges. "Yet while there are challenges," Gruver began, "We're also here to discuss some of the amazing things that are going on in the schools. We're excited to be here this morning, because we're usually here to listen and learn — but today we have the opportunity to tell you about the ways we're trying to get our young people ready for the 21st century workforce."

New Prague Schools Superintendent **Larry Kauzlarich** then detailed some of the new and emerging issues in "... meeting the educational needs of all students," noting that there have been significant changes in racial and ethnic diversity, greater numbers of students living in poverty, an increase in students with Limited English Proficiency (LEP), and changes to the traditional family structure. Similarly, he also noted the emergence of advanced technology use in and out of the classroom, and the increasing reliance upon standardized testing.

Gruver then provided an overview of "Project Lead The Way," a nationally recognized pre-engineering program for 7th—12th graders that "... focuses on inquiry and real-world problem solving," also integrating environmental science into the more traditional "STEM" (science, technology, engineering, and math) curriculum.

Following Gruver's overview, Shakopee Schools Superintendent **Rod Thompson** presented information about Shakopee's STEM Alternative Learning Center, adding that "... when we talk about our system's 'best and the brightest,' we need to understand that sometimes these students are the ones with purple hair, multiple piercings, and tattoos — we can't let stereotypes get in the way. If we fail our kids, we fail ourselves." Following in the conversation of more unconventional learning environments, Carver-Scott Educational Co-op Executive Director **Darren Kermes** explained that our community must recognize and invest in the value of non-college-bound students: "We've consistently put the emphasis on college readiness," he noted. "But we've fallen short for those kids who aren't college-bound but want to learn and work in an honest trade. They're talented and productive, but just not interested in a traditional four-year degree."

Rounding out the morning's discussion, Burnsville-Eagan-Savage School Superintendent **Randy Clegg** discussed the proven benefits of the AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination) Program, which is geared primarily for students in the "academic middle" that need additional help in learning study skills, developing better cognitive and critical reasoning skills, and practicing better academic behaviors. Finally, before a lively Q and A session with SCALE members, Belle Plaine Schools Superintendent **Kelly Smith** provided an overview of the growing number of school choice options (e.g., open enrollment, charter schools, on-line learning opportunities) and the changing role of the school counselor from that of an exclu-

sively academic advisor to one that also assists with various socio-emotional and chemical dependency issues. A link to the panelists' full presentation is available on the SCALE website at www.scaleinfo.org.

Don't forget to attend the next SCALE meeting on **Friday, Nov. 9, at 7:30 a.m. at Prior Lake City Hall** when the topics will include a presentation on future workforce needs (Scott-Dakota Workforce Development Center) and an introduction to the draft 2013 SCALE Legislative Priorities.

"The mission of SCALE is to forge new and innovative ways in which government entities can collaborate to provide superior services while making the most of limited resources."