

From the Superintendent's Desk
Dr. Jeff Athey
October 21, 2016

This is the third in a series of articles I have written this past month. This article is entitled "Becoming Life-Ready." (The first article I wrote talked about what it means to be "College-Ready." The second article talked about what it means to be "Career-Ready").

I don't know if we ever reach that point upon graduation from high school that we're "life-ready." By that time, though, students have had at least thirteen years of education (5K through 12th grade). They've had what a lot of people would refer to as "book learning." They have been instructed how to read, write, compute, and do basic math. During our upbringing, we learn a lot through "trial and experience." In some cases, it's what is learned through "hard knocks." We've also been taught about manners, about "right and wrong", and that we will be held accountable for our decisions and actions--good or bad.

With that said, what else do we need to know as we embark on life's next chapter—"Adulthood"? As mentioned in my previous two articles, there is a website (www.ReDefiningReady.org) that speaks to this notion of become "Life-Ready." It is defined as "leaving high school with the grit and perseverance to tackle and achieve goals." Students who are "Life-Ready" possess the growth mindset that empowers them to approach their future with confidence, to dream big, and to achieve big. Believe it or not, American high schools do provide social and emotional support and experiences to equip students with the life skills they will need for success in their future. When I think of where this happens, it begins when students develop career plans with the help of the school's Guidance Counselor and parents. This gets them thinking about programs of study, courses, related electives, career-related activities, and certifications needed.

To achieve a relevant 21st Century education, one should:

- Have increased access to Advanced Placement (AP) classes and International Baccalaureate (IB) courses and early college credits
- Have opportunities to complete industry credentials and college-level and career internships while still in high school
- Have a rich exposure to co-curricular activities and community service projects

As far as those "Life-Readiness" skills needed, they would include: open minds, curiosity, patience, empathy, courtesy, good manners, and tolerance. Three other skills I would add:

- Being a good listener (Really trying to hear what the other person is saying and make sense of it as opposed to rehearsing what you plan to say next).
- Acceptance of others (though their beliefs, religion, politics, skin color, gender, sexual preference, nationality, etc. be different from our own). Diversity should enrich us—not divide us.
- Love of others. (If there were more love in this world and in our own hearts, what problems couldn't be solved?)

It's not easy trudging down that "road of life." And, when we stumble or fall down, we need to be able to get back up, dust ourselves off, and continue doing the best we can.