

STAR SUPERINTENDENT

Global view in education is priority for Illinois K-8 district leader

Sarah Jerome has almost 45 years of experience in education, with almost half of that as a superintendent, first in Wisconsin, and now in the



Sarah Jerome

5,000-student, K-8 Arlington Heights School District 25 in Illinois. The pressing need to educate children to be global citizens has been central to her leadership, as has her passion for the advancement of women and minorities in education. The 2007-08 president of the American Association of School Administrators, she received the group's Dr. Effie H. Jones Humanitarian Award in 2009.

Q. You've stressed the importance of educating students to live and succeed in a global community. How have you put that philosophy to work?

A. For many years I've been interested in helping teachers, parents, students, and administrators think about their larger role in the world community, both in Wisconsin and here. In Arlington Heights, we developed partnerships with schools in China and Japan. An exchange program for staff and students with Japan started this year, and we hope to have the same thing for China. Our curriculum offers six foreign languages: Mandarin Chinese, Japanese, French, Spanish, German, and Italian. We try to integrate a global perspective in all content areas, even physical education. In addition, each building has a special project to help students recognize that they have a responsibility to help others in the world.

Q. How was the district's VISION 2020 strategic plan developed, and how does the WIRED for Success and Understanding concept fit in?

A. We created VISION 2020 in 2006 after about 100 students, parents and district friends came together for a weekend to discuss the future and what we wanted the district to become. Guided by a facilitator, we created the plan, which has been our road map ever since. We all see school through the rearview mirror of what we experienced. But VISION 2020 is a magnifying glass for the future and what we're trying to do. It's filled with great ideas, so many that we decided we needed a moniker that would capture the ideas

and be easy to read. In the WIRED logo, each letter leads back to something that's in our vision: World focus, Integrate, Reflect, Engage, and Discover (see logo in center of page).

Q. What methods help get the word out and encourage participation?

A. Our community cares a lot about education, but our audience isn't just parents; they make up only about 40 percent of our population, at best. We invite everyone in the community to every event so they remember it's their school and to remind them school quality helps define the quality of the community and real estate values. Our cable television channel highlights what we're doing. We hold Community Conversations. I hold Open Door every Tuesday, for anybody to come in and talk, including staff members.

Q. You've championed the advancement of women and minorities in education. What positive changes have you seen and what challenges still exist?

A. I'm definitely an advocate of women and minorities in the field of education. There are so many benefits of having the work force in education reflect the diversity of students in the classroom. It makes sense to have a balance that children can look at and say that they can do that too. Getting those role models in front of the children, whether it's ethnic, religion or gender, all of that matters. But there hasn't been

a steady increase. Over a 20-year period, 20 percent of superintendents are now women. Minorities struggle to get top posts, although African-Americans have more opportunities in urban areas and Latinos in states like California with large Hispanic populations.

We all have a responsibility to mentor, not just minority to minority or women to women. I've been lucky to have great mentors from all walks of life, including men and women as well as leaders of ethnic diversity. Reaching out to help mentor someone else goes with the job.

Q. What does your crystal ball show for the future of education in the U.S.?

A. One word: technology. It will transform us. Nothing moves very quickly in schools, but I think technology is the catalyst to change the way we lead our lives and the way we prepare our kids to be flexible learners who can re-learn.



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Sarah Jerome: Superintendent, Arlington Heights School District 25; (847) 758-4870; www.ahsd25.k12.il.us; jerome@sd25.org. ■