

## **“What is an Educated Person?” Conference**

**October 18<sup>th</sup> 2013, Midway Utah**

This conference began with the Key Note Speaker, Judith A. Ramaley, President Emerita from Portland State University and Winona State University. She was highly entertaining, and had lots of experience to draw from. The name of her presentation was, “A 21<sup>st</sup> Century Education: The Pursuit of Quality.”

Dr Ramaley started by asking the *audience*, “*How do you recognize a well-educated person when you meet them?*” As I discussed with the others at my table, I personally couldn’t seem to think of any recognizable traits (I started to worry that I was showing signs of a *non-educated* person!) Luckily the others at my table started the dialogue, and the wheels in my head started turning. As the whole audience got back together to discuss their ideas, we all decided on some common traits:

An educated person can be described as fully by how they interact with other people as by what they know. Educated people,

- Listen and pay attention to the ideas of others
- Read and understand
- Can talk with anyone
- Can write clearly, persuasively and movingly
- Can look at something complicated, figure out how it works and how to respond to complex and changing problems
- Focus on other people’s ideas, and practice humility, understanding and self-criticism
- Know how to get things done in the world and will leave the world a better place
- Have the ability to see the connections that allow us to make sense of the world and to act within it in creative and responsible ways

As I thought about these attributes, I thought of my own two children who I hope, with my help, will grow into “Educated People” one day. I also thought about my students (both past and present), and what I had done to help them progress on their journey to Educated People. I would love to make a bigger difference in my students’ lives, playing a part in them gaining any of these characteristics, but how do I do it? Dr Ramaley must have read my mind, because the very next topic she introduced was, “*How can we help students acquire these capacities to put their education to good use?*”

A summary of our ideas are as follows:

- Help students learn to ask good questions. In my classes, this includes thinking beyond the text, and asking “why?”
- Be open to real experiences- “When you are not told what to do, you begin to think what to do. You begin to see without distraction.” We also discussed “taking the kayak lesson out of the pool and into the river of the real world.”
- Create a “playground of inquiry” within our classroom, where we let our natural curiosity and observational abilities guide us
- Look for a confluence- Education is a journey and an on-going process shaped by MANY influences, intentional and otherwise. A whole series of circumstances make us into who we are.

By attending this conference, I was able to explore new ideas about educated people that I had not thought about before. I am excited to try to apply some of these ideas and make them a reality in my classroom. I know that mine is only one of many classes that a student must take throughout their educational journey, but I hope to do everything I can to contribute positively to that journey!