

Ten At the Top Addresses Teacher Shortage Problem In SC

On November 4th 2019 from 2pm till 4pm at the Executive Center in Greenville, SC, I attended the *Ten At The Top* (TATT) UPSTATE EDUCATION SPECTRUM FALL FORUM.

By Johnnelle Raines, Board Member USPIE

Executive Director of TATT Dean Hybl welcomed the attendees to the forum and explained the meeting objectives were to, "Develop a shared knowledge of the work-to-date that has focused on aspects of teacher shortage, and Unveil a regional teaching brand as well as evaluate opportunities for k12, higher ed, and business to utilize it."

The following are my opinions on this meeting.

TATT is all about "regional" not so much about local control. Their motto according to their web page is "*Ten Counties. One Upstate. Stronger Together.*" As I have stated before when I attend their previous forums, it reminds me too much of Agenda 2030 objectives that the United Nations pushes.

It is worth mentioning that our SC Governor McMaster will be the headline speaker at TATT's celebration of their 10th anniversary where they will "recognize businesses, organizations, and individuals who are helping them with their agenda. You can visit TATT's web page to learn more about their goals and objectives at www.tenatthetop.org and while visiting that web please click on "*Current Supporters*" from their drop down menu which will show you their list of supporters who contribute financially to keep this non-elected, non-governmental organization funded.

Others who presented during the slide presentation were, Dr. Laura Reynolds, Dean of School Education, USC Upstate, Randall Fowler, Director of Human Capital Legacy Early College, Margaret Spivey, Director of Professional Employment, Greenville County Schools, Kaylee Harrison, Program Coordinator TATT, and Jeff Bauer, Content and Creative Manager, Duke Brands.

I attended this forum because I am a Board Member of *United States Parents Involved in Education (USPIE)* and thought parents should be represented at this forum. After all, parents are a **major** stakeholder in education and teachers directly affect their children 5 days a week for approximately 7 hours a day. I wanted to see what this **non-governmental** group of people at TATT were proposing to actually do to attract more people to enter the teaching profession as well as what they were proposing to keep teachers in the profession here in the Upstate of SC.

The first question that came up in my mind was why SC Superintendent Molly Spearman who is an **ELECTED** employee of the SC taxpayers wasn't in attendance. Furthermore, to my knowledge, no one actually representing the SC Department of Education was in attendance. There were Superintendents, some Principals, and representatives from area upstate administrative positions in school districts present. One of my questions was why no one from the SC Dept of Ed was in attendance. The answer I was given was, TATT was **hoping** to share their information with the SCDOE and partner with them on this initiative to address teacher shortages.

I have no problem with citizens coming together to seek solutions to problems that are affecting children on a daily basis. However, I do have a problem with the target audience for this forum not including parents. How many parents even knew about this meeting? To my knowledge...there were no "just" parents at this meeting.

Teachers affect parents' children and should have been a target audience to reach out to attend this meeting. However, in the press release of this event, the word "parents welcomed and encouraged to attend" was not included.

Why is it that parents are not a target of concern at these non-governmental TATT meetings? The target audience is clearly business leaders, and education administrators. I wanted to ask that question of Dean Hybl but I had to leave the meeting 15 minutes early and did not get that chance. I plan on emailing him and asking him. Hopefully in their next

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forum discussing education issues they will reach out to parents who have their children in the public education system.

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I was not sure there didn't seem to be many regular teachers in attendance. If they truly wanted to know **how** to attract teachers to the Upstate of SC, it would seem to me that teachers could actually share **why** they think teachers are leaving the teaching profession and why it is hard for them to promote the teaching profession as a great job for students to consider when they graduate. If you don't know why teachers are leaving you won't know how to solve the issue of reaching out to attract prospective teachers.

Legislators from each of the Upstate Region who are duly elected by we the people were not at this meeting either. I found that odd. One would think our elected would be interested in what information they could gain from this forum. In fact, why aren't our elected officials spearheading discussion forums like this in their own districts? Why does a non-elected group have to organize such events?

This meeting followed the Delphi Technique. If you are not familiar with the Delphi Technique at meetings, please read more on this here at this link:

<http://www.vlrc.org/articles/110.html>

The best thing I saw that came out of a previous committee meeting formed is the survey a previous committee developed at an earlier forum TATT sponsored. It was stated that there was no consistent form given statewide to teachers when they left their positions at their schools to find out why they are leaving. It would seem that each district would want to know the reasons for a teacher leaving their job so they could evaluate their district's ability to retain teachers, and what areas they may need to change in their district to keep quality teachers in their districts. The forum asked attendees to take a look at the form they have developed before they left that was located on a table at the rear of the forum. I looked at the form and was impressed with the questionnaire. Indeed, if you can get teachers to be honest about why they are leaving the field of teaching, this would be a great tool in helping a district understand any issues they may need to address to keep from losing future teachers to other districts or to other professions. The key is...will teachers be honest? Fear is rampant among teachers. If you are leaving a job and don't want to burn bridges...you might not want to be honest so you want to leave open the opportunity to return to teaching in that district if need be.

TATT's decision at a previous forum was that teaching in the Upstate of SC needed a "brand" or a logo to promote teachers coming to our region. That brand was unveiled at this meeting. to attract teachers.

Teach to the Top is the brand developed by Duke Brands. (See screenshot below).

It was also noted by the leadership team of TATT that when a prospective teacher wants to maybe become a teacher in SC there are relatively few web sites that actually promote and help a prospective teacher to choose to come to SC. But the SC DOE has a section on their webpage specifically laying out how to become a teacher in SC. I am assuming that TATT believes this isn't efficient enough.

Also, it was stated during the TATT leadership remarks, before we headed into discussion groups, that we need to "invest" in teachers and we need to think of ways to return the teaching profession to a profession that is honored and respected.

I agree we need teachers to be a respected profession, you'll get no argument from me on that. But "invest" means...more pay. Which usually means a tax increase. I personally think we already "invest" enough in education,

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take a look at your property taxes and see what percentage of your taxes already are "invested" in education.

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As far as ideas on how to change the teaching profession to one that is valued and respected by the taxpayer, that is a **huge** task. The fact that students in SC are performing at the bottom of the rankings does not lend itself to respecting our teachers abilities. Teachers must earn respect...it's not just given automatically. The other problem we have in returning respect for teachers is that respect is a cultural problem which has rapidly expanded. Students not only disrespect teachers in the classroom, but students are disrespecting their own parents at home. Generations ago, respecting adults was pretty much expected of children. In today's culture, all one has to do is go to Walmart and see how children are talking back and disrespecting their own parents.

Another problem I had with this forum was there was not mention of wanting to attract "**quality**" teachers. We shouldn't want to be so desperate for teachers that we start hiring anyone who wants to be a teacher. **Quality** teachers need to be attracted to SC. Teachers who hold the same "*Bible Belt*" morals and values that the local community values is imperative. It was brought up at my discussion table that we need a more diversified field of teachers. I'm definitely not in favor of diversity just for diversity's sake. It seemed to me TATT is pushing even attracting teachers from liberal areas such as California and New York. The teachers we should be wanting to hire should be from our own local community where they understand the children and parents' local values and beliefs. We should be looking for teachers who value the community and want to work with parents to make sure they are educating students not indoctrinating them.

Also, with all the major teacher unions promoting liberal ideology and indoctrination in the classrooms, how can conservative parents ask their children to respect their liberal teachers who are going against their Christian family values they have been taught at home? How can respect for teachers be restored when daily we see teachers being arrested for having sex with underage children?

The other issue...which is the elephant in the room...is why would any teacher want to teach in line with Common Core Standards which have been proven ineffective? SC needs to adopt new, quality standards that teachers will want to teach by. Standards which have been proven effective. Teachers are tired of having to jump on every new bandwagon which is touted as being the silver bullet to fix education woes in SC only to find out it doesn't and they are blamed again for failure of producing educated students.

How do we return the teaching profession into a profession that students consider a viable job for their consideration? Great question. It's a question that **EVERYONE** needs to get involved in solving... not just Chamber of Commerce people and educators. One thing I know for sure is that throwing more money at this problem is not the answer. It's been proven time and time again that we are spending way more than we used to on education with no improvements.

I do applaud TATT for wanting to stimulate the conversation on how to address the teacher shortage. However, I think our **ELECTED** people should be driving these conversations within each district and getting input from average parents and experienced quality classroom teachers...not just administrative people and business leaders. In order for quality public education to succeed ...we need quality teachers and parents in on these discussions.