

## **Have You Heard?**

From Child Abuse, to Poverty and Equity, Red Clay has tackled some tough topics in regional professional development conferences held over the past two years, with plans to continue on an annual basis.

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“We have tried to shed some light on topics that people don’t like to talk about at times,” said Superintendent Merv Daugherty. “But we need to continue to grow as educators and expand our knowledge of these topics, as well as give people outside Red Clay the opportunity to learn. Every year, we will continue to help expand the knowledge of our educators and the community. Conferences are about knowledge, and awareness.”

Red Clay’s April Anderson, who coordinates the events, said the conferences have allowed the district to examine how the district handles challenging issues, and lead to better services provided to students and their families.

“The conferences are an opportunity for self-reflection as a district,” she said. “They allow us to work on relationships between colleagues - how we can work as a team - as well as helping people consider what they can do as individuals. They help us to identify our strengths, and where we can work harder on important educational issues.”

The first conference was held in April 2016 on Dropout Prevention. It focused on implementing best practices, strategies and interventions that are effective in the prevention of school dropouts. By providing an opportunity for school and community professionals to collaborate, many techniques and programs were shared that support student success.

Other conferences have included:

- The English Learner Conference in October 2017 was designed to empower all students and families who speak English as their second language. The conference provided support for families who face language challenges as well as for the Red Clay staff and community members who work with them. The theme was “Success for All” and addressed the need to support the different challenges English Learner students and families face including academic, social and cultural issues. Also included was a workshop addressing the rights of immigrant families.
- The Poverty and Trauma Conference in September 2016 was attended by more than 320 educators, administrators, vendors and state agency employees from across the state. The conference workshops provided resources, ideas and information about how trauma and poverty impact student learning and explained how educators and community members can help. Conference attendees participated in a wide variety of workshops to raise their awareness of the problems associated with poverty and trauma and to learn about approaches educators can take to build resilience and academic success.
- The Prevention of Child Abuse Conference, held in partnership with the News Journal and the Beau Biden Foundation for the Protection of Children, focused on providing educators and parents information on how to spot an abused child, and how to help abused students recover. Workshops covered human trafficking, online safety, talking to children about abuse and a host of other topics.
- The latest conference, Equity in Education, was held in January 2018. This year’s theme, “Understand Everyone”, included workshops that presented effective strategies to meet the needs of diverse student populations. Sessions featured professional speakers, including university professors, and included topics ranging from barriers and support systems for at risk students, self-regulation strategies, white privilege and race-related issues, culturally responsive classroom environments, and high quality assignments. Additional topics included restorative practices, family dynamics and cultural competence.