

# Education leaders 'blown away' by Scott's Branch students

by ROBERT JOSEPH BAKER | February 15, 2017 7:48 PM

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Student panel members for the American Youth Policy Forum visit included, from left to right, Tatyanna Simmons, Sarah Middleton, Symera Scott, Tymir Tindal, Deondre Brunson, Devin Brown, Robert Matterson, Tyrese Lawson, Naseem Johnson, David Allen Way, Zhailin Johnson, Kadryian Johnson Mercedes Oliver, Vaquan Wilder and Necholas Mitchell.

Education officials from North Dakota, Washington, D.C., Mississippi, Arkansas and South Carolina visited Scott' Branch High School Feb. 2 for a 21st Century New Tech experience.

“The students, teachers and administrators were phenomenal, and the team was blown away by them,” said South Carolina Riley Institute and New Tech consultant Kristin Cuilla.

Transform South Carolina Director Dr. Peggy Torrey agreed.

“You all made South Carolina proud last week during the AYPF visit,” said Torrey.

AYPF stands for American Youth Policy Forum, a non-profit, non-partisan professional

development organization that provides learning opportunities for policy leaders, practitioners and researchers working on youth and education issues at the national, state and local levels. Principal Dr. Gwendolyn Harris said that the visit allowed the team “to observe academic excellence as well as have the opportunity to see the high learning standards that exist every day at Scott’s Branch.”

“The visitors observed classes and listened to presentations on projects that included the Arvin Meritor Project, the SBHS Arts-Science Project, the HTML Website Project and the Clarendon County Project,” said Harris. “Again, visitors saw firsthand what happens in classrooms at Scott’s Branch every day.”

Clarendon School District 1 Superintendent Dr. Rose Wilder shared with visitors how New Tech continues to positively impact the school and community’s culture.

“It also has a positive impact overall on the district’s initiatives,” she said.

Harris said that New Tech has “made (her) a believer.”

“At first, I was skeptical about the impact it would have on student achievement,” she said. “But I see that Scott’s Branch students are still performing at or above the state average, which makes me exceedingly proud.”

New Tech English language arts teacher Detrice Brown said how the process looks, supported by social studies teachers Tommy Hall and Sharon Mellette.

“Other New Tech teachers at the school include Jasmine Matterson, Melisa Ard, Harold Ehnhuus and Grace Johnson,” said Harris. “Student panelists also answered questions and received outstanding reviews by the team.”

Guests besides Cuilla and Torrey at the Summerton school on Feb. 2 included New Tech Network President and CEO Lydia Dobyns; Dr. Denise Airola and Dr. Crystal Beshears with the University of Arkansas Office of Innovation for Education; Levi Bachmeier with the North Dakota Office of the Governor; North Dakota Department of Public Instruction Superintendent Kirsten Baesler; Dr. Kim Benton with the Mississippi Department of Education; Bryant Best and Joey Hunziker with the Council of Chief State School Officers; Union County Public School District Superintendent Dr. Lundy Brantley; Petal Public School District Dr. Matt Dillon; South Carolina Department of Education Office of School Transformation Director Dr. Latoya Dixon; Priyeha Gohil and Chris Shearer of the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation; AYPF Senior Director Dr. Loretta Goddwin; Don Gordon with the Riley Institute of Furman University; Marsha Hash of the University of Arkansas; Sonjya Robertson with the Mississippi Department of Education; North Dakota University Vice-Chancellor Richard Rothaus; Mark Saunders with the Virginia Department of Education; AYPF representative Jenna Tomasello; North Dakota Department of Public Instruction Director Wayne Kutzer; Virginia Department of Education STEM Director Tina Mazzacane; Ryan Miskell of WestEd; Anne Petersen with the Virginia Department of Education; Alan Richard with the Rural Schools and Community Trust; and Arkansas Department of Education School Improvement specialist Kim Write. Student panel members for the American Youth Policy Forum visit included Tatyanna Simmons, Sarah Middleton, Symera Scott, Tymir Tindal, Deondre Brunson, Devin Brown, Robert

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