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Study tour visits CNT: Corridor of Innovation | News | The Press and Standard

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Colleton County High School's Cougar New Tech was cited as a "corridor of innovation" when 28 top education policy leaders, practitioners and researchers from across the country visited as part of a study tour on Friday Feb. 3. The visit was part of the American Youth Policy Forum (AYPF) three-day conference being held in Charleston, entitled "Advancing Equity through Deeper Learning in Rural Schools: The Journey of School Transformation."

AYPF, a nonprofit, professional development organization, is committed to educate, inform, and engage policymakers in the development of effective and supportive youth policies, enabling young people to meet their full potential in school, career and civic life.

The tour focused on rural South Carolina, with an overview of the state education policy, along with successes and challenges pertaining to education reform.

Cougar New Tech, along with Scott's Branch High School, were the two STEM-focused schools visited by the group.

The visit included a student-led tour, an overview of the school by leaders, Project Deep Dive and a student/teacher panel.

According to the AYPF website, the study tour addressed how Cougar New Tech and Scott's Branch, both considered high-need rural schools, are meeting the challenges of preparing students for college and career success stating, "The I-95 'Corridor of Shame' in rural South Carolina is characterized by high illiteracy and high unemployment; yet within this corridor, two districts are working to transform their community into a 'Corridor of Innovation' through the New Tech Network," the site said.

"These two STEM-focused schools — Scott's Branch High School and Cougar New Tech — will graduate their first classes in 2017. The schools utilize four design pillars: culture that empowers students and teachers, project-based learning, broad use of technology, and school-wide deeper learning student outcomes.

Additionally, dual enrollment with college courses and engagement with regional employers are helping to advance equity and opportunity for students, families, and the community by promoting student development, growth, and economic self-sufficiency."

Tour participants included: Lydia Dobyms, president and CEO New Tech Network; Priyeha Gohil, Williams and Flora Hewlett Foundation; Dr. Loretta Goodwin, senior director, AYPF; Don Gordon, The Riley Institute, Furman University; Marsha Hash, University of Arkansas; Joey Hunziker, Council of Chief State School Officers; Sonja Robertson, Mississippi Department of Education; Richard Rothaus, vice chancellor, North Dakota University;

And Mark Saunders, Virginia Department of Education; Chris Shearer, The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation; Jenna Tomasello, AYPF; Wayne Kutzer, director, North Dakota Department of Public Instruction; Tina Mazzacane, director, STEM, Virginia Department of Education; Ryan Miskell, WestEd; Anne Petersen, Virginia Department of Education; Alan Richard, Rural Schools and Community Trust; Margaret Torrey, TransformSC; Kim Write, school improvement specialist, Arkansas Department of Education;

And Dr. Denise Airola, Office of Innovation for Education, University of Arkansas; Levi Bachmeier, North Dakota Office of the Governor; Kirsten Baesler, state superintendent, North Dakota Department of Public Instruction; Dr. Kim Benton, Mississippi Department of Education; Dr. Crystal Beshears, Office of Innovation for Education, University of Arkansas; Bryant Best, Council of Chief State School Officers; Dr. Lundy Brantley, superintendent, Union Public School District; Kristin Cuilla, director, District & School Development, New Tech Network; Dr. Matt Dillon, superintendent, Petal Public School District and Dr. Latoya Dixon, director, Office of School Transformation, South Carolina Department of Education.



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