

PRESS RELEASE

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Denville Schools Holds Annual Convocation for Faculty and Staff at County College of Morris

“Back to Normal,” Hope, and Empathy Were Among the 2022 Themes

Denville Township, NJ - On August 31, 2022, Denville Township School District’s faculty and staff attended the first in-person district convocation in two years.

“It’s so nice to be back and to see everybody, in-person, in one place,” Superintendent Dr. Steven Forte said, as he welcomed over 350 Denville educators to “Convocation 2022, Back to Normal.”

“I want to thank you so much. You guys did an amazing job,” Forte added. Forte took a moment to acknowledge the dedication of the faculty and staff during the more than two years of pandemic protocols:

“We are one of only about 40 districts in the entire state that got every kid back, in every school, every day, by September 2020 – not 2021, but by September 2020 – and that’s a testament to you. It was just amazing. The teachers wanted the kids back in school, and did whatever they had to do to get them back. Thank you.”

Forte also made reference to the “Back to Normal” theme of the day, when he assured the staff that for the 2022-2023 school year: “We are going back to normal.”

Throughout the hour-long event, teachers heard from a number of district leaders, as well as Keynote Speaker Randy Detrick, who shared his joy, empathy, and hope with faculty, staff, and administrators.

“Where there is HOPE in the future, there is POWER in the present,” Detrick began. “Guess what? We are all in the HOPE business – everyday, when we come to work, we’re filling hope in those children for their future, and it brings power to the present.”

Detrick is the host of the “Living on Purpose” podcast. He is also a husband, father, award winning skier, entrepreneur – who owns Blue Ridge Estate Vineyard & Winery in Saylorsburg, Pennsylvania – a motivational speaker, and a very positive person.

He did a smiling exercise with the audience that illustrated how smiles take away fear and distrust, he shared personal experiences of overcoming adversity, and reinforced lessons his mother taught him about being positive.

“Let negativity bounce off of you like it never happened,” he said.

As a vintner, Detrick understands the process of planting and nurturing seeds, and he marveled at the gift that educators have to see the seeds of greatness in every student and help them to grow.

Also presenting was Dr. Sandra Cullis Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment. Cullis highlighted district achievements and reviewed the district’s 2022-2023 goals:

1. Create a new district 5-Year Strategic Plan
 - a. Community members are invited to participate in the Strategic Plan Process on November 14 and 28, and December 12, at 7:30 PM at Riverview Elementary
2. Increase student achievement, especially in grades 3-8 math
3. Foster inclusivity
4. Increase resilience through mental health and wellness

Jeff Barnish, President of the Denville Education Foundation, also thanked the faculty and staff: “You guys did a fantastic job,” Barnish said. “I am proud to be a part of this community and to have a school district that was able to adapt so quickly and efficiently.”

The Denville Education Foundation provides grants to teachers for unique education initiatives. “We want you guys to keep sending us exciting grants, creative grants, and grants that are going to have the greatest impact on our student body,” Barnish explained.

Over \$400,000 in Denville Education Foundation grant money has been donated to Denville Township Schools over the past 14 years.

Denville Board of Education President Michael Andersen expressed his appreciation for the district’s teachers and staff. “Thank you for your dedication over the last two years,” Andersen said. “It’s been difficult and I thank you all.”

Andersen also welcomed the new teachers: “You are joining one of the best school districts in New Jersey. I measure ourselves as a best district not only by our test scores, but also by the staff and teachers and the outstanding work they do everyday. Thank you for joining us. I look forward to working with you.”

Presentations were also made by Evan Scala and Sergeant Michael Weldon, who provided an extensive safety review, Dr. Tony Iacono, the CCM President, and several members of the Central Office staff.

“I can’t say enough about how proud I am of this district,” Forte said

Denville’s 2022 convocation was held in the Dragonetti Auditorium at the County College of Morris. The 1:00 p.m. event included lunch and an opportunity for faculty and staff to connect in-person in an informal setting prior to the start of the convocation presentations.

The Denville Township School District is a Kindergarten through Grade 8 district that consists of Lakeview and Riverview Elementary Schools and Valleyview Middle School.

Classes begin for students on Tuesday, September 6, 2022.

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CAPTIONS (Photo Credit: Susan Marinello)

“Convocation 2022, Back to Normal” was held for the faculty and staff of the Denville Township School District on Wednesday, August 31, 2022, at the County College of Morris. Denville School Superintendent Dr. Steven Forte welcomed more than 350 educators to the event. “I want to thank you so much. You guys did an amazing job,” Forte said when reflecting on the past two years of the pandemic. “This school year we are going back to normal.”



Keynote Speaker Randy Detrick, shared his joy, empathy, and hope with faculty, staff, and administrators. "Where there is HOPE in the future, there is POWER in the present," Detrick began. "Guess what? We are all in the HOPE business – everyday, when we come to work, we're filling hope in those children for their future, and it brings power to the present."



Denville School Superintendent Dr. Steven Forte and Keynote Speaker Randy Detrick, at "Convocation 2022, Back to Normal." The event was held for the faculty and staff of the Denville Township School District on Wednesday, August 31, 2022. Detrick marveled at the gift that educators have to see the seeds of greatness in every student and help them to grow.