

Segue: Regional Superintendent of Schools Daiber talks education on WSIE

Madelaine Deardeuff, For the Intelligencer

Wednesday, December 5, 2018



On this week's episode of Segue, the premier radio show that discusses the lives and work of the people at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville and beyond, SIUE Chancellor Randy Pembroke, PhD, interviews Robert Daiber, EdD, Regional Superintendent of Schools for Madison County. This episode will air at 9 a.m. on Sunday, Dec. 9, on WSIE 88.7 FM The Sound or siue.edu/wsie.

A career educator, Daiber received his doctorate of education from SIUE, and bachelor's and master's degrees in education from Eastern Illinois University. Prior to serving as regional superintendent of schools, he worked for 28 years in the Triad School District, where he served in various capacities, including as a teacher, and a career and technical director. He assumed the duties as regional superintendent in 2007.

Aside from being regional superintendent, Daiber serves on the Madison County Workforce Investment Board, Madison County Youth Council, and the Southwestern Leadership Council, where he served as chair of the education committee. He also is on the Greater St. Louis Boy Scouts Council. His goal as regional superintendent is to help all schools to excel for the good of students.

"You started your career teaching at Triad High School. What subjects did you teach and how did you get into that particular part of education?" Pembroke asks.

"I taught manufacturing-related subjects and initially taught welding technology," Daiber says. "I was proud of the fact that I had one of the first dual-credit arrangements with Southwestern Illinois College. I was also very involved with developing general technology education subjects. I would help young people learn about modern means of communication, transportation, production and energy, which we see as our main career areas expanding today.

"At the end of my career as a teacher, I was very interested in engineering and technology. I received one of the first state grants to implement the contemporary Project Lead the Way. That initiative helped bring about what we now know as STEM education into the classroom for young people to realize that relationship between science, technology, engineering and math. That captures a good picture of my 28 years where I had a great time teaching. It was a hard decision leaving the classroom, but I knew I could make a greater impact on education."

"I find it interesting that things seem to appear in cycles," Pembroke recalls. "When I was in high school, I remember the emphasis on vocational opportunities, whether it was auto mechanics, woodworking, those type of activities, and for a while, the emphasis moved away from those activities.

“Now, I am hearing about a need for those activities again as we look at manufacturing workforce needs. I have a sense that you’re on the forefront of that, and how high school and college can help students prepare for the workforce.”

“Definitely!” Daiber mentions. “I was fortunate enough to be in a school that valued comprehensive vocational training. Some schools saw those programs as costly and maybe did not see those programs as able to prepare those students for college.

“I believe our schools have awakened and realized that they were not preparing students not only just for college, but also for the technical workforce.”

With a vision to educate the next generation about STEM careers, The Southwestern Leadership Council and local business leaders took the lead to develop the “Manufacture Your Future, Craft Your Future” program. The program has presented STEM education and employment opportunities to over 12,000 public school students around the Metro East.

“Tell me a little bit about your background as it relates to teaching,” Pembroke inquires. “Did you have relatives involved in the education field?”

“Yes, I had two great aunts who were teachers, but from their lifestyles alone, I thought teachers made a lot of money!” Daiber laughs. “My older sister was also a teacher. I always noticed one thing about teachers – it was that they always seemed connected to what was new to kids and always seemed to understand the kids’ dialect.

“I never planned on being a teacher. I made my decision when I was at Eastern Illinois University as a junior and got involved in a curriculum project that dealt with developing technology as a subject matter. I really ‘got’ it and got excited about what we were doing.”

“As Illinois is going through a teacher shortage, what would you advise young people, who might be unsure if they were to become a teacher, why should they pursue a career as an educator?” Pembroke asks.

“A career in education has so many intrinsic benefits,” Daiber says. “When you see yourself helping a young person make decisions and be successful in life, there is not another career where you see that happening and where you see the impact that you have on people. Students determine who are good teachers by the relationships they want to maintain over a period of time. That is the most rewarding thing I always share with people about being a teacher.

“Also, to be a good teacher, you have to be a people person, and you have to be able to entertain a lot of questions and have a sense of understanding. If you are that type of person, being a teacher is a great career path.”

Listen to Pembroke and Daiber’s entire conversation at 9 a.m. this Sunday on WSIE 88.7 FM The Sound or siue.edu/wsie.