

Lenore Person
COMMUNICATIONS SPECIALIST

New Initiative Brings Women Educators Together to Nurture Career Aspirations

YORKTOWN, NY, May 1, 2019 – Putnam | Northern Westchester BOCES partnered with the Leadership for Educational Achievement Foundation, the professional development arm of the New York State Council of School Superintendents (NYSCOSS) on Friday, April 26, 2019, to present the Women’s Initiative, a conference designed to support women leaders, identify women in education who have leadership potential, and help those women to aspire to leadership roles.

The event launched on Thursday evening with a purposeful opportunity for networking.

“Men make networking a priority. Women make work a priority,” said Jacinda Conboy, General Counsel for NYSCOSS, and host of the reception. “I want you to meet a new person this evening and follow up with them tomorrow. Have breakfast. Sit next to them during a session. Don’t pass up the opportunity to make connections. You never know when you will meet the person who will take you to your next step.”

Winsome Gregory, Assistant Superintendent for Instruction, Curriculum, and Personnel at Nyack Public Schools, met Doris Dapaah, a social studies teacher in the Mount Vernon City School District, and Rebecca Fedorick, Foreign Language Coordinator in the Port Jervis Central School District. They quickly connected over shared school experiences and the ambitions and interests that had brought them to the conference.

The following morning, Conboy and Dr. Charles Dedrick, Executive Director of NYSCOSS, opened the conference. The screen behind the podium displayed the quote: “Women leaders do not lead exactly like men. Not better. Not worse. But differently.”

One of the differences became apparent through the three conference speakers: Mary Fox-Alter, Superintendent of Pleasantville Union Free School District; Susan Vickers, Superintendent of the Hunter-Tannersville School District; and Mary Kay Roland, Superintendent of Johnson City Schools. Rather than offering ten-step tool kits, each of the women shared the stories that shaped their life and how their parents, teachers, mentors, and challenges influenced their career direction and leadership style. Each presenter left participants with distinct take-aways, encouragement, and confidence.

Westchester County Executive George Latimer, who shares NYSCOSS’ commitment to diversity, visited the conference with his wife Robin.

“The Women’s Initiative is such an important program because it is about bettering the way we all do business,” said Latimer. “No matter what that business is, we can all benefit from increased participation of women in key leadership roles. I am proud to support BOCES’ Center for Educational Leadership for this event and I am proud to support the mission of this initiative every day.”

Before the conference closed, Doris Dapaah had reconnected with Dr. Cheryl Champ, superintendent of Pelham Public Schools, who had led a professional development course Dapaah attended years ago. “I wasn’t sure she’d remember me,” said Dapaah. “I am going to ask her for a letter of reference.”

“The Women’s Initiative highlights the importance of women in leadership roles prioritizing the recognition and development of other women,” said Jackie Levine, BOCES Coordinator of School Leadership and Marketing Services. “Some of the leaders I have admired most have been women who made every effort to do just that with other women in the organization.”