

Scholastic R – Dr. Richard N. Wiener

Good Evening,

I would like to congratulate all of the recipients of the Scholastic R Award. It is particularly satisfying for me to see the accomplishments of our high school students, having known most of you as principal of the middle school. I am very proud of the continued effort you have given to succeed academically at the high school level. You are positioning yourself well for continued success in college and beyond.

My remarks this evening have to do with the extremely dynamic, competitive world that you are heading into. As Director of Curriculum, it is my job to understand the demands you will face and the skills you will need as you prepare for college and the workplace and venture into a world that has been significantly impacted by globalization and the technology revolution. The reality is, that your experience in college and the workplace (and the larger society) will be substantially different from your parents' experience, and will pose significant challenges and also offer incredible opportunities. Where the college learning environment of the past, for example, may have been relatively traditional and required the memorization of large amounts of knowledge, the colleges in this next decade will require a much higher degree of critical thinking and in-depth analysis, use of new technologies for learning, creating, and collaborating, and what is called, non-routine problem-solving. This is because the workplace of "tomorrow," will require these skills. The jobs of the 21st century will exist in a very competitive global environment, where anyone, anywhere in the world (due to Internet access and information and communication technologies) will have access to almost any job, any market, any information, any expert, and any university program. As a result, the competition for high quality jobs will increase substantially. Most traditional routine jobs will be automated, computerized, or shipped off-shore, and the most valued skills will NOT be the routine, traditional skills of the 20th century, but rather, what we refer to as the "21st century skills"....initiative, self-direction, the ability to think critically, to manage large amounts of information, to distinguish accurate and valid information from biased and faulty information, to understand and solve complex, non-routine problems, and to be creative and innovative; the ability to develop new services, products, inventions, and solutions.

The National Academy of Sciences in a recent report, *Assessing 21st Century Skills*, concluded,

The routine jobs of yesterday are being replaced by technology and/or shipped off-shore. In their place are jobs that cannot be easily automated...these jobs will depend on adaptive problem-solving, critical thinking, complex decision-making, and innovation.

I bring this to your attention this evening, because I think it is important to place your academic accomplishments in a broader context. To me, the importance of the Scholastic R Award is not so much a celebration of the high grades that qualify you for recognition; it is rather the significance and importance of the education you are receiving. It is the significance and importance and celebration of the effort you are making in order to develop the skills and competencies that will prepare you best for a very competitive world ahead. As Thomas Friedman commented in his book, *That Used to Be Us*, the United States may no longer have the "home field advantage," as the world becomes "flattened," as he put it. The advantage goes to the players who are the best educated, most knowledgeable, self-directed, creative and innovative individuals, who are able to compete on a global playing field.

You students have demonstrated the ability, desire and effort needed to succeed, as shown in the award you are receiving this evening. If you continue to work hard and you continue to dedicate yourself to your education, I assure you that the Ramsey School District will provide you with the kind of 21st century education

that will position you extremely well to succeed in college and the workplace. I am confident that your hard work as students and our hard work as educators will result in an education that will prepare you to tackle the challenges you will face in a changing global economy and will inspire you to embrace the opportunity to accomplish great things.

Congratulations and continue to work hard as you continue your education here at Ramsey High School.