Michael Rice Nomination for Superintendent of the Year

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Western Michigan University has always enjoyed a close partnership with Kalamazoo Public Schools. For the past 10 years, that partnership has been taken to new levels as both organizations have embraced the mission of making sure that Kalamazoo Promise-eligible students prepare themselves for college life.

I've enjoyed that deepening partnership because KPS is led by someone--Michael Rice--who shares the same critical values I treasure. He has a fundamental belief in the ability of young people to succeed and the ability of public education to set the stage for their success. He wants what parents want and what the Kalamazoo Promise donors want. He wants for students what they want for themselves--success and a chance to build a happy and productive life.

Each March for the past six years, nearly 1,000 KPS sixth-graders have visited the Western Michigan University campus--one middle school at a time. It's called Bronco BUDS and it an opportunity to encourage students to start thinking of themselves at home on a college campus. I always greet those students when they arrive. They don't come alone. Most often they come with Superintendent Rice, who can barely contain his enthusiasm, his conviction and his delight that those young people will be college students and they will succeed. He knows that the tour of classrooms, labs and libraries are important. He also gets that the luncheon stop in the student dining hall and the soft-serve dessert might be just as important to creating a favorable impression in the mind of a middle schooler.
• He's in it for the long haul. Those spring trips to campus are part of Michael's commitment to building a college-going culture that includes every student and every family. He is determined that nothing should stand in the way of a KPS student becoming a Promise Scholar. That's why he works so hard at building literacy, engaging parents and making sure students keep moving forward as they realize and fulfill the Promise.

• It's always apparent to me how deeply he cares for his students. His students know it too. He talks with them and he listen to them. They consider his level of caring a fact of life.