



U.S. Rep. Alma Adams speaks with local educators and students during an open roundtable discussion at Mudpies Early Childhood Learning Center.



Congresswoman Alma Adams invited members of the WS/FCS School Board, teachers, students and educators to roundtable discussion on Wednesday, August 19.

Adams, school board discuss early childhood education issues

BY TEVIN STINSON
THE CHRONICLE

U.S. Rep. Alma Adams sat down with members of the Winston-Salem/Forsyth County school board and other educators in Winston-Salem on Wednesday, Aug. 19, to discuss the importance of early childhood education.

Adams, a former educator, expressed her displeasure with what is happening with education in the state and said she is doing all she can to improve the situation.

"There is a lot going on in Congress right now that should concern you," said Adams. "A lot of what is going on I am not pleased with."

"That is why I wanted to come here today to hear your opinions so that we can come up with other plans to attack the issues in our school systems."

The round table discus-

sion took place at Mudpies Early Learning Center and allowed school board members, teachers, educators, and students from the area a chance to voice their concerns about the school system before the upcoming school year.

Before the start of the roundtable discussion, Adams toured the Mudpies facility. After the tour, she said she was very impressed with what she saw inside the learning center, located on East Seventh Street in downtown Winston-Salem.

"I don't know what I expected. I had never seen the facility before, but I must admit that I am very impressed," said Adams. "If I had little children, clearly I would be bringing them over here."

Adams, who serves on the education and workforce committees in Washington, D.C., went on to talk about how important

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early childhood learning is to the development of students.

While working with the education committee, Adams said she has been working to gain the reauthorization of ESEA (Elementary and Secondary Education Act), which emphasizes equal access to education for all.

It is well documented that in recent years the state has asked its teachers to do more with less. Over the last decade, teacher salaries fell farther in North Carolina than any other state.

"It is shameful that we don't pay our teachers what they deserve," said Adams. "We need our best people working with our youngest students to build that foundation."

Tony Burton, chief executive director of Mudpies, said it is hard to maintain faculty when they don't have the funds to pay.

"It's hard to keep faculty members when we can only afford to pay them minimum wage," said Burton. "In this field, you must have a four-year degree. There is no reason why I should have to pay

them less than they deserve."

School board members talked about early education centers that are not doing what they should to develop children. Deanna Taylor said it is important that these early "learning centers" be held accountable.

"We aren't holding these facilities that are calling themselves learning centers to their word," said Taylor. "Accountability is a big issue. We have to make sure they are doing what they say they're doing."

A number of students from the area also got a chance to voice their opinions on the importance of early childhood education and development.

LaSonya Killian, a junior at Carver High School, said it is important that a strong foundation is built to prepare students for their futures.

"If we set the founda-

tion by the time these students get to high school, there won't be a question on if they want to go to college. They will already know and be on the right path," LaSonya said.

Rodney Ellis, president of the North Carolina Association of Educators, thanked C Adams for putting the roundtable together to improve the future of the students in the area.

"Congresswoman Adams is the first person to ever bring these groups of people together to talk about the issues we have. I applaud her for that."

After the roundtable discussion, Adams talked about the importance of listening to those who are in the classrooms and working with the students every day to better understand the issues they face.

"To fully understand the people you are serving you have to walk the walk," Adams said.



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