

Opening Remarks by Dr. Elizabeth Grant at the 9/14/23 YNC Meeting (Not recorded)

Why did I take the job? “Because Salt Lake City is a gem.”

Vision: With a concerted effort we can do it. Salt Lake City can lead the state in equity, student growth and accomplishments. Achievement is often linked to family background, but we can add value to that student and achieve greater student progress. If someone comes in below grade level, we can get them back to grade level and beyond.

In the area of equity, we can offer advanced academic programs. We can lead in opportunity with more pathways to college. We can build career pathways through honors programs and produce more National Merit Scholar recipients for example. Salt Lake has a natural richness of academic and educational resources with universities, business colleges, technical training facilities and other learning centers.

A look back & forward. In post-war Salt Lake there were 45,000 students enrolled in our public schools. That number has dropped to about 20,000 today. During the loss of so many students, we closed 30 schools. But haven’t closed any for the past 20 years. Our schools were built for about 550 students, but several are less than half full. The money being used to maintain these schools could be placed elsewhere. We need to spend our money wisely. Schools below recommended enrollment levels can’t provide a rich academic program. In some cases, this means there is only one class per grade level. This means teachers are deprived of “learning communities” with other teachers at their grade level. With bigger student populations we can open new programs at our schools.

The Dignity Index. Dr. Grant talked about her visit with students at Highland High School where she introduced the Dignity Index; a strategy about how to treat everyone with dignity, create civil conversations, solve problems, and prevent violence. This will be promoted at Salt Lake schools.