

Business-Education Mix

Working to Transform Indiana High Schools

Dr. Eric J. Ban, principal of Crown Point High School, worked in a Dallas, Texas company developing new models of higher education before bringing his business experience back home to Indiana in 2008 to lead the 13th largest high school in the state.

Crown Point High School is at the epicenter of a regional economic development initiative for Northwest Indiana. It is working in partnership with the Center of Workforce Innovations (CWI), Center for Excellence in Learning Leadership, Northwest Indiana's One Region One Vision, Indiana Education Roundtable and the Lumina Foundation. The U.S. Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan, visited Northwest Indiana on September 8, 2011 on his "back to school" tour to celebrate the Ready NWI plan!

Ban recently responded to the following questions:

What is it about your background that resonates with business leaders?

Business leaders seem to connect with my business vocabulary. Too often we use jargon in education that confuses and frustrates our stakeholders. Business leaders also comment on how I use metrics and tons of data in goal setting, reporting and strategic planning to drive improvement and results.

What are your best lessons learned in business that you now use in education?

Lesson 1: What you don't focus on is essential for success! For example, my athletic department runs building operations (maintenance and custodial). My learning leaders (assistant principals) have to focus on improving our core technology – teaching and learning.

Lesson 2: Hire bright people with a can-do attitude! I don't obsess about credentials and licensure. I look for bright people who connect with kids, love this community and want to work hard in a team atmosphere. I don't want people who are too entrenched as our business is rapidly changing.

Lesson 3: Data infrastructure is critical! We have the same issue as health care. Just as health care professionals need the right data at the point of decisions on patient care, educators need the

right data at the point of instructional decisions for student learning.

What needs to be done in Indiana high schools to revitalize Indiana's economy?

It is a very simple concept – start with economic development (emerging best jobs), work backwards with postsecondary partners (universities, trade organizations, community colleges) and lay out experiences that provide college credits and 21st century skills to all students. The concept is simple, but the execution is brutal.

This is where we need our business leaders to help negotiate the mergers, joint ventures and takeovers to make it happen. We have made great strides in Northwest Indiana. CWI is leading a regional team of business, postsecondary, K-12, community and political leaders to make it happen across seven counties.

What is the most promising work you see in Indiana education?

I believe the Indiana Education Roundtable has demonstrated the commitment and focus to transform our high schools. Our governor, state superintendent and commissioner for higher education are committed to transparency and results. I have been helping to develop a common Indiana high school transcript to document all the experiences and skills that are valued by higher education and the workforce (common college and workforce currency). High school principals have the most immediate impact on the future of the Indiana workforce. The roundtable is providing the thought leadership to select the right metrics, data and tools to make it happen.

How have you applied your business skills across the state?

I have helped form the Indiana College Acceleration Network (iCAN). This is a group of high schools and school districts using college and workforce metrics from a grassroots perspective. Our state leaders need bright people out in the field to develop cutting-edge solutions. I believe in both top-down and bottom-up leadership. My job is to make sure more kids succeed in postsecondary education, the workforce and life. I am energized that more of the right people are sitting around the table with a focus on the right results for Indiana kids and families – that is my definition of leadership.



Dr. Eric J. Ban

Crown Point High School Recognition

- Indiana Department of Education "Spotlight High School"
- State of Indiana school address: "Innovative College Programming"
- WFYI: Featured in "Indiana by Degrees"
- ACT college acceleration research high school (first in the country)
- *Education Week*: Innovative dual credit model in partnership with Purdue University Calumet, Indiana University Northwest and Ivy Tech Community College has saved families over \$1 million in college tuition costs and is producing over 7,000 validated college credit equivalents

INFORMATION LINK

Resource: Dr. Eric J. Ban is a Merrillville High School graduate who earned bachelor's, master's and doctoral degrees from Indiana University. His complete vision for economic development through high school transformation can be found in a new book, *College Acceleration: Innovating Through the New American Research High School*. More information is available at www.collegeacceleration.com