

A disturbing letter was recently sent to the members of the Macon County Board of Education, regarding certain observations by Keith Adkinson, Executive Director of the Fred & Ruth Clark Macon County Scholarship Fund, in which he stated that this will be the second year in a row that a Red Boiling Springs student will not be a recipient, because the interviewed applicants came across as woefully deficient in several critical areas, and these students are doomed, when and if they are, in fact lucky enough to squeak into a college.

The Letter reads as follows:

If you will indulge me, I would like to share with you certain observations I have regarding the Red Boiling Springs applicants for our Macon County scholarship. This will be the second year we have not awarded a scholarship to an applicant from your school. This year, we had 11 applications and saw three. I don't recall how many we had last year of how many we saw. What I do know is that, for two years in a row, the result has been the same. The interviewed applicants come across as so woefully deficient in several critical areas that I thought I owed it to you to articulate my position. And please bear in mind that these are observations not necessarily criticisms.

The most glaring deficiency is their apparent inability to enunciate, articulate, communicate and otherwise engage in social and verbal intercourse with the interviewer. Since all of life, for someone seeking or obtaining an education or simply seeking to survive, rather significantly hinges on one's ability to communicate adequately, make eye contact, and otherwise interface with their boss, their peers, fellow employees, customers, teachers at the higher education level, and just about everyone else, it is essential that these skills be developed certainly by graduation from high school.

In this regard, the system has certainly failed the students from Red Boiling Springs High School that we have interviewed. It has also failed the applicants we have interviewed regarding their ability to communicate via the written word. For example, if the applications are a manifestation of the best an English Honors Student graduating in the top 10% of their class can proffer, then something is critically wrong and these students are doomed when and if they are, in fact, lucky enough to squeak into a college that will hold them to the same standards as other students from elsewhere. Ones that can and will enunciate, articulate, communicate via the spoken and verbal word, make eye contact, and speak otherwise than monosyllabically.

Based upon what I have seen, our RBS students would fold under pressure and fail abysmally.

I trust you will receive these comments in the context of someone who has given many thousands of dollars of scholarships in our county over the past decade or so. Please know these are my personal observations, and most of Jett, but not necessarily embraced by Ruth Clark, who has not been consulted.

Also, my youth was such that I cobbled together every possible scholarship I could find; I took public speaking, participated in debate clubs and outside oratorical contests – anything I could to hone the essential skill of communication (oral and written) because it is so essential to everyone. It was critical of me as I aspired to be a lawyer.

Therefore it concerns me when I encounter young graduating students who simply cannot communicate in the mother tongue. Perhaps, in the future, someone might give them some guidance with the actual completion of scholarship applications and spend a moment or two addressing how one communicates in an interview environment. This is not an observation restricted to our scholarship application – if they can't master the fundamentals of communication they can be smart as whips but perceived to be dumber than an oyster and they will fail at life.

If there is anything I can do to be of assistance, you need only ask. We are guardedly optimistic that the applicants next year from RBS will meet the minimum criteria for serious consideration. To do so, they will be evaluated not so much on your perception of their academic accomplishments, but rather upon our perception of their ability to market themselves in the real world

With best wishes, I remain,

Sincerely, F. Keith Adkinson

When contacted by telephone on Monday morning, May 9th, Principal Don Jones, of the Red Boiling Springs High School stated: "There have been plenty of people who have graduated

from Red Boiling Spring High School and went on to become doctors, lawyers, judges and teachers, and Mr. Adkinson' words are unfortunate. Many other young adults, who have graduated and went straight to work, have raised families and become very successful in the working world. We have some wonderful, well-rounded students here at RBS High and they are strong enough to shake off these accusations and move on."

(As you may recall, in 2009 Mr. Adkinson was the guest speaker at the RBS Graduation ceremony, where he delivered an uninspired speech, that left many people stunned. The Macon County Chronicle received several letters to the editor and one upset parent stated: "I can't imagine that a student found any portion of his remarks to be uplifting, inspiring, or motivational. Instead it was as if he came to beat them down. He told them many would be failures, and only a small percentage would succeed. He advised them to not get married and have a kid right away and screw up their life, and referred rudely to the manner in which they dressed. Furthermore, Adkinson's introduction and his own portrayal of his "greatness" in life, and what he thinks he has become, overshadowed the accomplishments of the young valedictorians and salutatorians, who sat on the stage, and gave their short, but personal speeches, while he rambled on for his 20 minutes. Sadly, much of that was excerpts from a Bill Gates' speech.

And while many of the insights provided by Gates and presented by Adkinson, are reality, the combination along with his personal stated expectation of them failing, as a disappointment for graduation night.)