**Kaine Welcomes Back City Educators**

Senator Says There’s ‘A New Era Dawning’

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**By EMILY SHARRER**

**HARRISONBURG** — U.S. Sen. Tim Kaine has been in politics since the mid-1990s. But as he told hundreds of Harrisonburg teachers Thursday, there's a role he's held twice as long that's just as important — a public school parent.

“First, as a public official, thank you, you do very important work. That's all I'm going to say as a public official,” the veteran Democratic politician told the teachers, who were gathered for Harrisonburg City Public Schools’ welcome back breakfast at Harrisonburg High School. “This is a different kind of speech than I'd normally give.”

The former Virginia lieutenant governor and governor began by expressing his gratitude for the teachers, calling them life-altering mentors.

Kaine, elected to the Senate in November 2012, for the most part steered clear of political discourse but did give his opinions on several prominent educational issues.

During his time as a politician, Kaine said an emphasis has been put on high-stakes testing, where students, as well as subgroups of children, are expected to all perform at the same level on assessment exams, such as Virginia’s Standards of Learning tests.
“[There’s] a new era dawning,” he said, noting that the past era focused on “all children,” whereas the new era will focus on the success of “each child” individually.

“Do we reauthorize No Child Left Behind?” Kaine said, referring to the 2001 federal legislation that called for 100 percent of students — and those in subgroups based on ethnicity, income and learning disabilities — to pass standardized tests in math and reading by 2014.

Virginia has a waiver that frees it from some of the restrictions of the No Child law, but legislators are working on a permanent overhaul of the way schools are held accountable at the federal level.

“As we think about [No Child], I’m going to be thinking about this individualization,” Kaine said.

He also said he supports providing more professional development opportunities, early childhood education and career and technical education for the range of options it provides students.

Presenting various options for employment will help convey to kids “what the broad world of work is like,” Kaine said.

In addition to Kaine, Harrisonburg Mayor Ted Byrd, School Board Vice Chairman Nick Swayne and Harrisonburg City Schools’ Lucy F. Simms Educator of the Year Candy Foster also gave speeches during the breakfast, heralding the start of a new school year.

“Being a teacher in my opinion is one of the highest callings,” Byrd said. “We appreciate each one of you for choosing this profession.”

During his remarks, Superintendent Scott Kizner encouraged teachers to step out of their comfort zone in the coming year.

“Risk-taking and even failure helps our system grow,” Kizner said. “Being complacent and only embracing the status quo will do a disservice to our students.”
On Tuesday, HHS, along with the division's five elementary and two middle schools, will open their doors to more than 16,000 students.

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