



## Superintendent Spotlight

### **Dr. Craig L. Parkinson, Superintendent Chester Upland School District**

November's featured Superintendent is Dr. Craig L. Parkinson of the Chester Upland School District. Dr. Parkinson graduated from Millersville University with a Bachelor's Degree in Social Work and earned a Master's Degree in Education from West Chester University. He was a practicing social worker for eight years before entering the field of education. He held multiple positions in education including special education teacher, administrator, Dean of Students, Assistant Principal, and Principal. During the 15 years in his positions of Assistant Principal and High School Building Principal in the Phoenixville Area School District, Dr. Parkinson had the opportunity to help transition the school district into one of the top districts in the state of Pennsylvania as well as the country.



Recently named the Superintendent of Schools in the Chester Upland School District (CUSD), Dr. Parkinson says, "I hope to provide the children with some amazing academic and life experiences. I am committed to bringing a change to a community that is in great need. The support in my short time at Chester Upland School District has been amazing from the various stakeholders." He believes that his arrival to the Chester Upland School District was a spiritual calling, "I grappled with the thought of leaving Phoenixville, a place that had become my second home. The relationships I had established there were amazing. I had supported the community to build something that was extremely special for the children. I truly believed that it would be the place where I would retire. However, I was made aware of the opportunity in the CUSD by a friend who thought it would be a perfect fit with my skillset and an opportunity to make a difference in the lives of many children who were in need of support. I prayed on the move; and I sought every reason why I should not make the transition, a stronger force pulled me towards Chester/Upland. I was truly motivated by my belief that I could be the person to make a difference in the lives of the children in the CUSD through establishing the right relationships with the community members. It is my belief that together, working side by side with all of the stakeholders, we will change the trajectory for the students of the Chester Upland School District."

Some of Dr. Parkinson's short- and long-term goals for the Chester Upland School District are to:

- Immediately provide stability and consistency in the area of leadership.
- Get out and meet as many community members as possible and share my proposed vision for the children of the CUSD.
- Create an environment that is conducive to learning for all students that is aesthetically pleasing and is safe for all students and staff who we serve in the district.

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- Provide our students with new learning opportunities that will have them prepared to build careers upon graduating from high school.
- Make certain that all of our students who wish to pursue post-secondary educational opportunities are well prepared and possess the skills necessary to be successful in any academic arena.
- Establish policies to ensure CUSD is the hub of the community that provides all of our stakeholders with the support needed to grow and thrive.
- Ensure our district is the driving force of what helps revitalize a community that so many have come to give up on.
- Establish policies and put programs and people in place that will have the CUSD be recognized as one of the best in the state. This will be accomplished by the formulating of meaningful relationships with our parents and community partners.

Dr. Parkinson believes that the partnership between YMWIC and the Chester Upland School District is important, explaining, “YMWIC embodies everything that I believe to be right about education. The organization is progressive and recognizes the importance of thinking outside of the box to educate our children. The organization recognizes the importance of preparing our young people for careers of tomorrow and focusing on their personal strengths to get them to where they need to be. YMWIC has been instrumental in changing the trajectory for so many young people and has a proven formula. I have had the pleasure to observe what the organization can do for children through first-hand experience. I witnessed the organization spark the interest of a young man who had no idea what he wanted to do with his life. Through college fair exposure and trips to college campuses with YMWIC, this individual’s life was completely changed. He was offered a full scholarship and eventually graduated from Morgan State University and is now employed by NASA. I can assure you that this would not have happened if this young man did not come in contact with the YMWIC program. It was truly a life changer.”

Dr. Parkinson fosters this relationship with YMWIC by making more families aware of it saying, “The best way for the information to get out about this amazing program is to continue to flood all forms of communication where students and parents have access. The doors of the school district will always be open to YMWIC.” He plans to grow YMWIC in the district by creating an even stronger partnership with us. He would like to explore having YMWIC develop a curriculum that can be taught throughout the day to Chester Upland students to increase their exposure. He would also like to see additional after-school programs created through the YMWIC.

In closing, Dr. Parkinson says, “The CUSD is very fortunate to have YMWIC support our children. The opportunities that are presented to our children are amazing and will have a profound impact on their lives. I will continue to be a champion for the Foundation providing support whenever needed.”