



For Immediate Release
May 3, 2010

For more information contact:
Bonny Millard, Executive Director, Blount Education Initiative
(865) 273-1210 or (865) 789-6007; bonny@blounteducation.org
www.blounteducation.org

Other Media Contacts:
Amy Schwinge, (865) 982-6626 or amy@marybethwest.com

New Blount Education Initiative Survey Confirms Parents Play Key Role in Influencing Students to Graduate from High School

More than 90 percent of high school seniors plan some type of training, certification or college after high school to prepare for career and better quality of life

Maryville, Tenn. — Note to parents: your children are listening. Encourage them to finish their high school education. Note to graduating seniors in Blount County: you have a jump-start on the rest of your life, with more than 90 percent of you planning further education and training after high school.

This information comes from the second annual graduating senior survey by the Blount Education Initiative (BEI), released today and including the area's four high schools: Alcoa, Heritage, Maryville and William Blount. Questions ranged from post-high school plans to level of interest in staying in Blount County to join the local workforce.

The survey results confirmed the vital role that parents play in influencing a child to graduate from high school. When asked "Who influenced you the most in your decision to complete high school?" 76 percent of students ranked parents as the most influential, up slightly from BEI's 2009 study of 75 percent.

"Research consistently tells us that when parents are involved in their children's educational lives, more positive outcomes are achieved," said Bonny Millard, executive director of BEI. "A great deal of research is available to validate the profound benefits for both students and schools when parents and family members become participants in their child's day-to-day educational experience."

The BEI survey results substantiated the fact that young people look to their families, particularly their parents, to set the example and the expectation about education.

"Blount Education Initiative's goal is to make education the number one priority in the community, but that can only be achieved if parents are aware of their role in their own child's educational achievement and actively fulfill it," Millard said.

The results of the survey revealed that students understand the importance of post-secondary training or education. More than 90 percent said they planned to obtain some type of training, certification

"Who influenced you the most in your decision to complete high school?"

1. Parents (76 percent)
2. Other (17 percent)
3. Grandparents (4 percent)
4. Teachers (4 percent)
5. Guidance Counselors (1 percent)

Note: total does not equal 100 percent, because some students chose more than one answer on this question.

or education after high school to help prepare for a career. This includes two- and four-year colleges, career technical training and military service. Only 2 percent said they planned to join the workforce immediately after high school compared to 7 percent in 2009.

Since its inception, one of BEI's key messages is that students will have to have additional training or education after high school in order to be successful in today's global economy.

"During the past few years, BEI has urged students to continue their education after high school to prepare for a career and ultimately a better quality of life," Millard said. "We're thrilled that not only do our graduating seniors understand this message, but also that they are following up with action."

When asked whether or not students felt prepared for life after high school, 87 percent of respondents reported they felt very prepared or somewhat prepared. Up two percentage points from last year, 82 percent of Blount County's graduating seniors from the four high schools reported plans to attend a two- or four-year college.

On a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 meaning "do not agree at all" and 10 meaning "completely agree," seniors ranked their level of agreement with several statements regarding educational attainment as follows:

- "It's important to have a high school education." (9.50)
- "Education should be a top priority in Blount County." (8.52)
- "It's important to have a college education." (8.12)
- "It's important to have job training after high school." (8.07)

These results were largely comparable to results from the 2009 survey.

"BEI certainly is pleased that seniors from our four high schools widely agree about the importance of graduating from high school and the need to pursue further skills and knowledge after graduation," said Matt Murray, president of the Blount Education Initiative.

When students were asked to rate their level of interest in staying in Blount County after high school or moving back after completing college or other training, 50 percent of the graduating seniors said they were either somewhat interested or very interested in either staying or moving back to Blount County.

Complete results of the survey can be found on the BEI web site www.blounteducation.org.

ABOUT BLOUNT EDUCATION INITIATIVE:

The Blount Education Initiative's (BEI) mission is to make education the Blount County community's top priority by developing a sustained public awareness campaign focusing on the critical issues related to education, supporting local schools in their efforts to provide a top-notch education for all students and serving as a bridge between the educational community and businesses to develop meaningful collaborations.

Achieving consensus about education's vital importance, and what forms of support are required to achieve educational excellence, requires an organized, concerted campaign involving information exchange, dialogue, learning and persuasion. That's why BEI exists – to facilitate this process.

For more information, visit www.blounteducation.org

METHODOLOGY FOR BEI SURVEYS IN 2010:

Each of the four high schools in Blount County (Alcoa, Heritage, Maryville and William Blount) asked graduating seniors to complete a one-page written survey for BEI in March 2010. A total of 876 surveys were completed and returned to BEI. The survey data was not weighted.

#