

SST 9 Transition Conference Photographer

Many years I have taken pictures for the SST 9 (State Support Team) transition conference at Stark State on Nov. 2, 2018. This was the first year that it was held at Stark State, it was normally at Kent Stark. Another change this year they had middle school students instead of high school students. I have been taking pictures for these conferences ever since I was in middle school. I take pictures for the big conference in April also, but the nice thing about this conference is I get to take the day off of school to take pictures. My parents also volunteer at this conference every year with my mother being on the board and my dad just likes to help out. We got up early so that I could stop at Starbucks to get the limited edition reusable holiday cup. It was taking them longer so the nice people ended up giving me two cups instead of one, so the day was off to a good start.

Once we got there I was greeted by TerryL who is the SST 9 Transition Specialist who asks me to take pictures for events. I also saw many of the other volunteers that I have met over the years and they are like old friends. I got a few set up photos and then took a tour of where all the rooms were located, so I could freely move from room to room to get shots. While we were waiting for the students I helped fill the goodie bags. This was better location than past years where the rooms were spread across different buildings at Kent Stark.

Soon the busses started coming from districts all over the area. Jackson did not send any students this year which was sad because I enjoyed when I was a sophomore and was able to come as a student instead of the photographer. I took pictures of the students coming off the bus and signing in at the conference. This was hard to do because it was rather cold outside. As the students waited in the auditorium for the programs to start I took many fun shots. I found that the middle schoolers were easier to get good shots because they were more energetic than the past high schools students and wanted to get in the pictures. The program started with several speakers, one being Stark State Staff and one being a Magician/inspirational speaker. He did several tricks one with an orange, one with ropes and one with cards. The message was you make your own magic. Next the students were broken into groups and sent out to different

rooms at different times. They took tours, met with Junior Achievement, and also did stations with life skills. I took time making sure I got to each room a few different times trying to get new faces and experiences during all the time slots. Lunch was done as a big group this year and I went around and get kids pictures then too. Some schools even requested a group photo and I gladly obliged. The day ended with a few more speakers from Stark State and a video of LeDerick Horne who I met in person at prior conferences. The students were sent on their way happy and educated. The look on their faces afterwards is why I enjoyed taking pictures and also it is pleasure to work with the people from the SST 9.

This experience as conference photographer has always helped me grow more confident and makes me come out of my shell. I remember when I first started, I was afraid to go up and take the pictures. I always wanted my mother to be at my side asking her for reassurance. This day I was totally on my own taking the pictures all by myself and was much more confident. Even Terryl commented how much I have grown and matured over the years, but I really think that the SST 9 giving me the opportunity to take these pictures over these years has built my skills of the photographer I am today.

