



Tomorrow's News Today

News From the Tomorrow River School District

From Michael Toelle, District Administrator

September 2017

Vision for the District

"We are limited not by our abilities, but by our vision." Anonymous

As we start a new school year, it's time to start thinking about our mission and vision for the year. Certainly, our district's mission statement assures that "all students will feel valued, will be given educational opportunities which will allow them to achieve at a high level, and will be given opportunities to maximize their social and emotional potential." But within the district's mission statement, there is much room for interpretation by each building administrator and the district administrator as to how this overall mission gets accomplished.

One of my goals this year is to continually share with the public my own interpretation and vision for the district, not only for this year, but for several years to come. Each month I plan to discuss a part of my vision and a plan to move the district in the stated direction. As examples, over time I will be discussing data-driven decision making, supporting and empowering teachers, maintaining an orderly school environment, sharing an academic plan for the future, and establishing mental health partnerships. For this month, I am focusing on the development of ideas to establish more opportunities for our high school students.

Incidentally, I point out that as a growing district we'll be facing some unique challenges in the next couple of years. For one, the high school and middle school classes are both approaching 340 students, which is the largest either class has ever been. Class sections are already full, so if we continue to grow, class offerings to include required classes and electives will need to be increased to accommodate the population. My vision for gaining more opportunities for our high school students is not only a vision that follows our district's overall mission of "preparing students for future success and allowing opportunities to explore multiple pathways for the future" but it could also prepare us as a growing district.

First in the discussion of opportunities for high school students, I would like to see us look at classes more and more educational institutions have been implementing: online classes. Is this a viable option for our high school students? If we truly want to prepare students to be career and college ready then yes, I believe it's a good option to implement for our students. Can high school students succeed in this type of class? Again, yes I believe so, especially if students are motivated to succeed in chosen fields of interest to them. It may not be an option for everyone, but it does give students the opportunity to independently succeed, which will allow them to be more successful after high school and at the college level. There would be some cost to enrolling students in an online program, but one staff member could supervise a large number of students, making the option very cost effective. It also allows the students to pursue opportunities we couldn't possibly offer within the four walls of the school building.

The second area I feel strongly about is the need for students to spend more time in the work force and exploring careers while in high school. Employers are always looking for qualified and hard-working individuals who are task orientated and independent thinkers. I envision creating a much bigger and better work-study program and allowing students to receive credit for time served on-the-job in local businesses. The current program would be changed into a supervised work program, so a contract would be created, and students would be supervised by periodic visits from a school representative. It's a win-win program, with the school benefiting by allowing the students to get practical on-the-job experience

and the employer benefitting from the opportunity to train and hopefully hire a new employee. And this win-win program would be at limited cost to the district.

Both of the above ideas are practical and make sense, whether or not we have a growing school population, basically because it's good business to keep implementing change to keep up with current trends. I would never recommend changing for the sake of change, but in this case the changes fit my vision and our district vision. Please ponder the above thoughts and if you have comments, feel free to get ahold of me. My door is always open, my computer is on, and my phone is available for calls. Until next month, have a safe and fun start to the school year. Please don't hesitate to call if a situation arises in which I can be of help.