

New school year brings several new initiatives

As a school superintendent, the first day of a new school year is special. Over the years, I recall seeing almost every emotion a student can exhibit on this day.

We pay individual attention to students that need encouragement and a helping hand, but the vast majority of students are filled with excitement, enthusiasm and boundless energy.

This school year unites important planning initiatives that we have been working on for years. These include school construction projects dating back to 2007, the Vision Conference held in August 2015 and a proposal for a new educator compensation plan that began in January 2013.

The school construction projects are among the most noticeable changes; they have involved five of our schools and the Oregon Pool. The contractors have concluded their work at Brooklyn Elementary School, the Oregon Pool, as well as at Netherwood and Prairie View. The construction crews are still working at Oregon Middle School and Oregon High School, with a completion date scheduled for late August 2017.

This school construction addressed the academic and safety needs of our students by alleviating overcrowding, ensuring secure facilities for students and staff and creating flexible learning spaces that are consistent with the district's

curriculum.

As I visit our schools and see the construction occurring before our eyes, I reflect on the thousands of young people who will enjoy these facilities as part of their daily school experience. The investment that the greater Oregon community has made will shape our future for years to come.

The Vision Conference (school and community planning event) in August 2015 was an experience for the ages. The 135 participants personally heard from a panel of Oregon students on what was important from a student perspective.

We now have five "What We Value" statements that summarize the work from this planning conference. Over the next several months, you will learn more about how we, as an educational institution, are living these values to better the young people in Oregon.

The five statements are like puzzle that creates a web of support for our students throughout their school experience.

What we value:

- Caring and professional educators
- Strong family and community partnerships
- A whole-child emphasis
- Relevant and empowering learning experiences
- Educational equity

On behalf the Oregon School District, I have an important fact to share. Through the collective work of students, their families, and all 600-plus faculty and staff, we have a 99 percent graduation rate for the Class of 2016! We will continue to work with a few students to raise our graduation rate to 100 percent.

This brings me to the next important initiative, which is a new compensation plan for our teachers.

We have reviewed various plans since January of 2013, and recently the educator compensation committee submitted their report to the Oregon School District Board of Education. Over the summer, the board studied the plan.

On Aug. 22, the board scheduled a Nov. 8 referendum to request additional funding for the Oregon School District. We will begin a series of informational releases on the Nov. 8 referendum in early September.

In its simplest form, the new compensation plan is necessary to ensure that we have the best teachers in every classroom. The plan is consistent with research studies, which clearly indicate the classroom teacher is the number one determinant of a student's success.

This is especially important with the pending teacher shortage that is looming in Wisconsin. We will share more about the plan in the upcoming weeks.

In closing, I want to express our deep appreciation for your support of the Oregon students and staff. We are ready for another school year, and invite parents and community members to visit our facilities.

Please stop by one of our schools or attend an event and see us in action as we actively build the 4C's of Competence, Character, Culture and Community.

Dr. Brian Busler is the superintendent of the Oregon School District.



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