

Changes in K-12 educational practice

This is the third in a series of four articles highlighting K-12 educational issues in Manistee County. Today, we are discussing changes in K-12 educational practice that are happening now and changing education in the future. The series will conclude in June with your local educational leaders weighing in on what needs to happen locally to insure student success in the coming years.

The State of Change

I have narrowed the changes in K-12 Education down to five areas that are impacting K-12 education today and will be hitting us in the future. Certainly, there are more areas than the five referenced here but these issues stand out for us today.

1) Technology options: Online learning, cyber schools, iPads, blogs, assistive technology, electronic books, virtual



Scott Crosby
GUEST
COLUMNIST

MANISTEE INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL

classrooms, smartboards, chat rooms and the list goes on. Today's schools and students are behind if they don't have access to an array of technology options to assist them in learning. What does your school offer? And how can we insure that our students have access to it to insure their future success? The ability to understand and utilize technology is critical for individual student and school success.

2) Data analysis: Today we are assessing each student individually to look at their annual growth in each subject area. We are looking for trends in learning. Are desired content areas being

taught, and if so, with what success? We can look at attendance over time; we can sort students by interest area and by academic achievement. Today's teachers need to record, review, and analyze data to address learning needs, make curriculum changes, and to report out on their progress. The ability to collect, interpret, share and utilize data to document and improve instruction is critical to our school success.

3) Individualize success:

If your student does not understand fractions, we need to stop and re-teach fractions so that he/she does before moving on. If that means we need to provide models for reference, demonstrate real-life applications or find another connection that works for him/her, we need to do it. This does not mean stopping the rest of the class, it means intervention by use of small groups, before or after school sessions, it could

mean providing them a unique technology application, or other things. It is no longer OK to just move on when the majority of the class understands a concept. We have to individualize success for all students in the future.

4) Professional development:

What we teach, how we teach it, the depth at which we teach it and how we can connect with all children continues to change. When the content changes, the technology changes and everything else is changing, we have to be intentional about having ongoing regular professional development for our teachers. This simply can't occur just once a year before school. To be successful you will see that schools must conduct this periodically throughout the school year.

5) Career and college

ready: The state is already publishing rates of how each school is doing in preparing all children to be career and college ready.

When a child leaves school, if we are successful, he/she will be considered career and college ready. This means students have the skills necessary to go to work and/or to go to college and be successful in what they pursue. This means not just able to read, and do math, but also it means that students possess the critical thinking skills, the application skills the abilities to apply their learning on the job and in college.

Our local schools continue to be challenged by funding, demographic shifts and educational practice changes — all coming at them at an alarming rate. The final article in our series in June will share how our local Manistee County area educational leaders plan to address these issues in the future.

Scott Crosby is the superintendent of the Manistee Intermediate School District.