

Embracing Change in School District #2142

My wife and I were talking the other night thinking of the way in which our schools are going to be operating in the not so faraway future. Here is part of what we see to come.

The way in which we do business is probably going to change in that part of our school system will be traditional and in other ways not so much. So, what is going to be the same? We will have some brick and mortar buildings in reasonably centralized locations which serve a general area. This is dictated because of the changing demographics in the area.

What is going to be different? These buildings will be energy efficient and fairly different in regards to the use of technology as a means of providing a quality educational product. So, what's the big deal with this from this aspect? If we look at some of the collaboration began by President Sue Collins of the Northeast Higher Education District we are beginning to see some of the effects in our schools now. The school board and local principals have made note of these offerings in recent meetings. Course offerings in Babbitt are: 18 semester college courses for juniors and seniors and they include courses in Public Speaking and Introduction to Novels, College Algebra and Trigonometry, College American History, I and II, College Biology and Environmental Biology, Industrial Maintenance, Cisco, Introduction to Computers, Forest Field Skills, Printing and Publishing, Accounting I and II, and Masonry and Carpentry.

I view this collaboration as strength to be built upon.

Let's put this collaboration and use of technology together and what do we end up with? I think it will be a school district that is more distributed as to how classes are delivered than people of my generation and older are used to. It also frees up where we can hold these classes somewhat. Where? I think almost anywhere if the technology is in place. This means we can share the course offerings amongst everyone in the district to reduce the cost of educational delivery. I'm pretty sure this discussion is going on through many school districts throughout Minnesota, not just this one.

So, what might be a practical application of this as it relates to our area? Let's take the Tower area for example although this can be extended anywhere in the district.

First, what resources does the area have? My short list is this and I'm sure there are more:

1. Fortune Bay – contains a restaurant, golf course, hotel and I believe an entertainment center along with meeting rooms.
2. Lake Vermilion – Tourism, Large body of water used by many people both from and out of the area. Home to many seasonal residences both in Tower and Cook areas.
3. The Soudan Mine And Underground Laboratory – Tourism, Scientific Research
4. Local school facilities – Location to meet and educate.
5. **NEHED – Northeast Higher Education District** with the assets of the local colleges in our area.

Second, what are the needs and possibilities of these resources and how can this work to everyone's benefit as it relates to the school system?

1. Fortune Bay – Some possibilities include: Courses in restaurant, golf, hotel and gaming management come to mind and there are probably more. Coursework may be held on location and distributed from there. It will develop educated talent locally while helping it to remain a valued facility in the area.

2. Lake Vermilion – Tourism Management & Development, Water Research, Recreational Related Programs, Construction Related Coursework, Construction Management.
3. Local School Facility – Provide a location for research, coursework and means to distribute that coursework throughout the district. Hold area relevant courses at this location. Ensure that adequate facilities and technologies are in place for hosting coursework to remain viable. The proposed K-6 building in Tower can be used as needed for more than a K-6 facility. It must have an adequate media center facility for this to function well.
4. Soudan Underground Laboratory – Research Facility with potential to educate, develop future scientists and generate coursework locally if we can find a means to collaborate. Generate more awareness of this facility in our area.
5. NEHED – Collaborate with local areas to ensure it remains a successful and integral part of the educational landscape throughout the region. Provide Instructors to assist in retaining students who will continue their further education in our colleges.

How else might this help? Perhaps with some creative scheduling some of the bussing that will have to occur might not be 1 or 2 days per week. If we can cut some costs while reducing bussing I think anyone it affects in this district would be for it.

Are all or any of these collaborations going to come to pass? I don't know but the potential exists and I believe we are going that direction more quickly than we think throughout the school district. Working together can provide some impressive results.

How we view our school in these times will change by necessity and survival. It is more dictated by finances and numbers than we care to admit but it is the reality of it that we are faced with and sticking our heads in the sand as some are doesn't solve any problems.

I also think that the details from above are left to others who are a lot smarter than myself.

Now, what was I doing? Oh yeah, **Go BETAS!** (Area Swim Team Servicing Babbitt, Embarrass, Ely, Tower, Soudan)

Have a good week all,

Jewell Herring

Vote Yes! Committee Member

Babbitt, Mn.