



Bond research, new curriculums highlight 2018 for CV schools

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Chippewa Valley Schools Superintendent Ron Roberts said collecting data on a 2017 failed bond and new curriculums will be the big focuses of the district in 2018. Photo provided by Diane Blain

CLINTON TOWNSHIP/MACOMB TOWNSHIP — In May 2017, an \$89.9 million bond proposal by Chippewa Valley Schools failed, with 58.6 percent of voters voting against the proposal. The funds were to be used for student safety and facility upgrades around the district.

In 2018, Superintendent Ron Roberts said the district doesn't have a new proposal ready to go, rather they are going to take time to collect data and figure out how to move forward with a plan that is supported by the community.

"We want to understand what is important to our community and we are working to do that," Roberts said. "I think what people don't understand is even though our buildings look nice, we are not funded at a level adequate enough to maintain those buildings for a prolonged period of time. So we are moving forward with collecting data so we can make a decision that we think our community will support."

While the bond work will be important, Roberts said 2018 will also be a big year for implementing new curriculums at all levels.

In the fall, the district introduced a new district-wide English language arts curriculum for students in kindergarten through eighth grade. Some high school teachers also started piloting a new ELA program so they are ready for the students coming from the lower levels.

Roberts said training teachers will be a top priority in 2018 to make sure everyone is acclimating to the new curriculums.

“Professional development is important for the future, and we ultimately want to make decisions for what is best for our students and staff,” Roberts said. “Language arts will be a key area this year.”

At the high school level, the district will also work on new science courses that fit the Next Generation Science Standards, a set of standards Roberts said the district is using to adjust the science curriculum.

Roberts said the new curriculum is more about experimental design and students learning through experimentation.

Also at the high school level, Roberts said they are looking to implement some new courses. The district is currently in the process of developing a women’s study course and an African American studies course.

Both, Roberts said, are based on student needs and desire. The goal is to implement the new courses for the 2018-19 school year.

With ever-evolving standardized testing and expectations at the next level, Roberts said they want to make sure students are prepared for whatever they pursue after graduation.

“Things we are trying to put in place with our new curriculums is that kids now, when they read and write about what they read, they are expected to share it more and then kids respond to their thinking,” Roberts said. “It is all about thinking and collaboration, and it reflects what a modern workplace is like.”

While students are a top focus for the district in 2018, Roberts said the district will also be looking to keep current employees and bring in new staff this year.

Contract negotiations will take place for all labor groups, Roberts said, as all the contracts expire at the end of the current school year. The sides will start meeting in February and March with the hope to have everything in place by time the next school year starts.

Roberts said that includes teachers, administration, support groups and other labor groups. The current contract was a two-year contract and Roberts said the next length will depend on a lot of factors, but contracts are typically between one and three years.

The district is also hosting a job fair on Jan. 25 to find new employees for almost every position outside of teaching.

“We need people in Chippewa Valley schools, and it is a good place to work,” Roberts said. “This is an intensive process to not only find employees, but retain them.”