

Chalkboard

By

Dr. Randy C. Barrett, Superintendent
Gentry Public Schools

Sometimes an organization needs to review its reason for being. My records reflect that the last time the Gentry Public School District looked at its mission statement was February 17, 1992. The following is the school board policy adopted then.

“PHILOSOPHY: The primary goal of the Gentry Public Schools is to instruct the students of the community so that they will be equipped to live productive, active and satisfactory lives in today's society. To accomplish this we believe those individuals need an opportunity to acquire specific competencies in the following: A] the fundamental concepts of subject matter, B] the development of skills, C] the academic needs of both the college-bound and non-college-bound students, D] A broad understanding of world conditions today, E] the development of self-discipline and appropriate behavioral patterns, F] The development of the individuality of the student through the creative process, G] the development of citizenship, H] the development of an appreciation of literature, music, the pictorial arts and nature.

OBJECTIVES: The objectives of this educational system will be in accordance with the philosophy. The objectives are as follows: A] to provide the highest degree of instruction for all students in the community, B] to prepare an adequate foundation for those who wish to further their education, C] to prepare the non-college-bound student by providing training in a basic understanding of required knowledge and skills for satisfactory living in today's world, D] to promote an atmosphere of independent thinking and to develop a desire to learn more, E] to promote appropriate personal and social behavior by programs and activities which develop reliability, responsibility, democracy and varying aspects of patriotism, F] to instill a sense of individuality and a sense of shared purpose, G]to provide a well-rounded, liberal arts curriculum, H]to improve the quality of teaching by utilizing special talents and abilities of the staff.”

I cannot tell you what the revision was or what the previous policy said. I can tell you at the time of the revision, I was planning a trip to Gentry for a first interview for the announced superintendent's position.

A review does not always indicate a need to revise. For the most part, the policy seems to have stood the test of time. The philosophy and objectives ring as true to today as they did 14 years ago in 1992.

Yet the first statement of the philosophy may bear further examination. It reads, “The primary goal of the Gentry Public Schools is to instruct the students of the community so that they will be equipped to live productive, active and satisfactory lives in today's society.” Maybe that single statement would be enough for a mission statement for the school district in light of the last two words it contains- “today’s society”. I suspect no one would offer much debate that “today’s society” has a fluid and ever changing meaning with an implied sense of staying abreast of changing times. The critical element of the statement, “instruct the students of the community so that they will be equipped to live productive, active and satisfactory lives”, is reflected in the individual mission statements of the respective campuses.

“The primary mission of Gentry Elementary Schools is to work in partnership with students, parents and the community to establish a strong foundation for lifelong learning by providing a safe, nurturing, child-centered environment. As we foster intellectual growth, we will contribute to the emotional, moral, aesthetic, social and physical development of our students.”

“Gentry Middle School, in partnership with parents and community, will provide a safe, standards-based, educational program that will enable adolescents to become successful and adaptable students and citizens.”

“The mission of the Gentry High School is to provide the highest quality, comprehensive education for every student, regardless of individual background or ability. Provided with a safe and nurturing environment, the Student will be empowered with the critical thinking skills, problem-solving abilities, self-discipline and self-motivation that are required for the 21st century.”

What are the key words you identified in summarizing all of the statements? Did these make your list, “partnership, students, parents, individual, community, successful, adaptable, empowered, self-discipline, self-motivation, productive, active, lifelong”? They made mine.