

(8/30/23 – District Administrator’s Corner Article)

This past week, the River Valley School District welcomed our students and staff back to school. Creating a welcoming school environment is incredible work. It cannot go without notice that our staff takes a great deal of time to make students feel welcome and safe. Whether they are 4 or 14 years of age, students want to feel like they belong and that they matter.

The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction defines much of this work in our social and emotional learning processes through which students gain and “apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions.” Some might even say it can be summarized as “being a good human.”

Strong social skills allow for successful transitions in life tasks such as complex learning, problem solving, controlling impulsivity, and caring about yourself and others. Embedding these skills in our day to day work at River Valley is part of planning for what comes next for our students. Whether they enter the service, a career, or more schooling, it is an important consideration to be sure our students are not only academically ready but also socially and emotionally ready for what comes next.

These hopes and expectations are supported at the state level as they apply to meaningful and relevant futures in our Wisconsin communities. The broad areas that we embrace include evaluating and creating a supportive school environment, implementing school-wide social and emotional learning programs, and then successfully integrating social/emotional learning into the curriculum of our classrooms.

At a workshop this past summer in which teacher leaders were engaged in conversations about our students, the team summarized that our impact as educators goes way beyond a report. We were focusing and learning about “observable impacts.” We know the work in our schools extends beyond the classroom. We want our students to become involved leaders in our community. The five attributes which the team listed after a lengthy discussion included the following:

- Integrity
- Emotional intelligence
- Effective communication
- Creativity
- Perseverance

We work to make sure all students have these essential attributes. If every community member, in all the different jobs we do, embraced these five expectations, we believe “being a good human” would be much easier. The observable impact would be enormous. The River Valley School District will continue to support the developmental growth of all our kids—both academically and socially. As Aristotle stated, “Knowing yourself is the beginning of all wisdom.”

Sincerely,

Loren Glasbrenner, District Administrator  
River Valley School District