

## April 2018 Superintendent Message

Hello, my name is Mark Haag, Superintendent of the Lenawee Intermediate School District.

I would like to talk a little bit today about employability skills and preparing the talent needed for today's workforce and just as importantly, the workforce of the future. In my position, I am fortunate enough in my position to be part of many local, regional and statewide conversations with representatives from business and industry discussing what their needs are and how to further develop a vibrant workforce.

Though many of these conversations become very specific as it relates to skills and knowledge they need, all seem to agree they will change quickly. This leaves us in the precarious position in education of constantly trying to "catch up", especially in the area of Career and Technical Education. We know advances in technology accelerates change that often leaves us in the "catch up" mode when it comes to these specific skills.

The good news is what I hear employers seeking much more often are "soft skills" or habits that I truly believe all can build and achieve, and most are timeless.

The list of things I hear coming up repeatedly include:

Dependable

Motivated

Strong verbal communication

Team Player

Flexible

Willing to Learn

These characteristics can be developed, which is why we focus on these and others in our programs at the LISD. Many of the specific skills needed in careers will change, but if you possess some or most on the list I just shared, you will likely be successful.

I recently read in an article entitled "Preparing Students to Lose Their Jobs" by Heather E. McGowan she speaks of 80% of the economy facing disruption through digital transformation, which means our students are preparing for jobs that don't exist yet and likely will change or disappear again during their work life. She also cites a study by Deloitte University Press on the impact of digital transformation predicts that half of the content in an undergraduate degree will be obsolete within five years. Though this may not be a heartwarming prediction for parents investing in higher education, it is likely the reality our current students.

So what can we do as parents and educators? In addition to helping teach and develop specific skills where we can, we can try to emphasize these soft skills with our young people. There are a number of ways to develop these traits within your child, starting with modeling. Don't be afraid to dialogue with students about characteristics and the realities of change – they need to know!

Finally, I would like to thank the many local businesses and employers for their participation in our 2018 Reverse Job Fair on April 26<sup>th</sup> at the TECH Center. Not only will some students receive an opportunity for employment or further training, they will get to showcase their trade specific skills along with some of these important soft skills. Equally as important is they will have an opportunity to have authentic

conversation with an employer in their field and local experts. Thank you for your time and support of this important activity!

It is safe to say our students will need to be nimble and embrace change more than any previous generation in order to be successful.