

Chippewa Valley Schools leaders discuss 2019

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Chippewa Valley Schools Superintendent Ron Roberts' biggest plans for the new year relate to the bond and putting together a priority list and timeline for certain projects.

File photo provided by Diane Blain

CLINTON TOWNSHIP — When it comes to New Year's resolutions in education, a top priority in Chippewa Valley Schools is to ensure school safety. In November, a bond proposal passed, which, in part, would fund security enhancements — including security cameras and replacement of door locks — at existing buildings and facilities.

Chippewa Valley Schools Superintendent Ron Roberts

“Our biggest plans going forward are related to the bond,” Roberts said. “What we're working on now is putting together a priority list and timeline, because all the projects we want to do with the bond require different planning.”

Roberts said there is a lot going on currently in the district with curriculum.

In 2018, new curriculum materials were instituted related to language arts in the elementary and middle schools.

At the high school level, the implementation of an African-American history course was a success.

“It fit with our strategic plan,” Roberts said. “Part of the plan was to address the increasing diversity in our community and help people feel more connected to our school district.”

When it comes to student involvement, Roberts believes that an involved student is a good student, whether it be through athletics, the arts or after-school clubs.

“We want kids to be connected to school,” he said. “We don't want kids to come to school, check in for the first bell and check out at the last bell. We want them to commit to doing something extracurricular.”

Chippewa Valley Schools Board of Education President Beth Pyden

“Our main goal is to keep our promise to voters in regard to the Safe Schools, Strong Schools initiative,” she said.

The initiative is aimed to restructure safety mechanisms and technology; improve infrastructure; and develop and improve school buildings, programming, athletic fields and buses.

“They trusted us with \$97 million and we’re going to keep our promise to ensure that we focus on safety first and that we’re accountable for every dollar that is spent,” Pyden said.

Pyden said that in the summer, entrances at Chippewa Valley and Dakota high schools will be redesigned to enhance student safety.

Staff accomplishments from 2018 included Charlene McGunn, the executive director of Chippewa Valley Coalition for Youth and Families, being named the Preventionist of the Year by the Michigan Prevention Association; and Kristen Gersch, a special education teacher at Cheyenne Elementary, winning a “Make a Difference Award.”

Like Roberts mentioned, part of the board’s strategic plan was to increase diversity awareness.

“We brought in a consultant, Jay Marks, to teach our staff about diversity and what that looks like in a public school,” Pyden said. “We’ve expanded some of our curricular offerings to include our more diverse population.”

Pyden has served on the board since 2012.