

Ten Years from now...

*Earlier this month the Norwalk Reflector asked area superintendents to write on what they thought schools would look like ten years from now and what communities needed to do to help schools get there. The article that follows is what I submitted on behalf of Western Reserve:*

The quest for a vision of what school communities will look like in ten years comes at an opportune time. It is an important question and one that has needed asking, and has needed answering, for several years now. The last note before tackling the question is to ensure understanding that suitable answers are as numerous and diverse as the people giving them. Emerging technologies, varying governmental policies, and the changing landscape of American culture require school communities to be flexible and to evolve with changing conditions.

In many ways, ten years from now our school community will look much like it does today. The people of the State of Ohio through the legislative and budgetary process have put nearly eleven billion dollars into renovating and replacing schools throughout the state. This was accomplished with much foresight and research into what Ohio needed to be competitive in the next century. Since 1785 Ohio has formally designated land and resources to educating its children. The Western Reserve Local School District completed the renovation of its campus ten years ago and is in an excellent position to meet the needs of students for many years to come.

There is much discussion in the capital regarding electronic schools and online education. Western Reserve understands the importance of utilizing technology to aid instruction and to help formulate student learning. The integration of technology into schools is a continuing process as producers of hardware and software maintain products that match the learning requirements of students. A vast majority of the curriculum will be available online in ten years, and Western Reserve is dedicated to providing safe, technology equipped classrooms for students to attend and to having trained professionals guide their growth and development.

The people of Huron County can do many things now, and in the immediate future to ensure all local schools are equipped to provide students with the skills necessary for the twenty-first century. Maintaining a solid tax base for districts will allow schools to leverage their resources towards emerging technologies that will bring the most benefit to the students. Area school districts are already using creative ways to ensure students have access to the most recent hardware and software. With recent changes in the state curriculum, many schools are focusing resources into technology that would otherwise be used for textbooks that will cover information that is no longer required.

Together, we can support this transition to the “blended” education of online learning and teacher directed instruction that will become a reality in the next ten years. Most importantly, we must support and encourage the students. Provide them with technology whenever possible. Computers, gaming systems, MP3 players, internet access; the more

children have the opportunity to become comfortable with new technological skills, the better they will adapt to changes at school. The challenge for schools is to find ways to integrate the classroom content with the current technology. We must be patient as we ask them to master both the academic curriculum and new forms of hardware and software. Most likely they will need time to balance both tasks; they are still children and they are often learning as fast as they can. While they can set up a new Facebook account within minutes, they may still need a week to learn twenty new spelling words. Today's young people are in a unique position of having greater demands placed on them for academic achievement as well as new venues in which to learn it. Remember, they have a hard enough time keeping track of the TV remote and the Wii controller...and those are two subjects they actually like.



Rodge F. Wilson, Superintendent  
Western Reserve Local School District