

**OCTOBER 10, 2022**

**Learning is Different in the East Troy Community School District!**

These are not just words to us. We have an unwavering belief in the ability of each student to achieve success by creating the conditions that allow them to be inspired, invested, interested, kind, caring, and respectful people. By focusing on the right work, we continue to move from educator-driven environments – in which learning is personalized to the learner – to learner-empowered environments, in which learning is personalized by the learner. We are focused on the whole child and the entire health of the organization by working on all sides of our educational system through a commitment to our district goals.

To foster a truly healthy learning culture, we recognize that it is essential to be both an outstanding place to learn and a great place to work. ETCSD is steadfast in its strategic priorities and key performance indicators within each of the following priorities:

- Support conditions for learner empowerment.
- Cultivate a healthy organizational culture that supports learning through the values of relationships and trust, communication, commitments, ongoing learning, voice, joy/happiness, compassion, gratefulness, self-reflection, feedback, accountability, and results.
- Maximize the value of our educational institution via families that attend ETCSD, along with the greater East Troy community through increased communication and engagement.
- Ensure the district acts as a good steward of resources toward fostering and supporting our mottos, our other strategic priorities, and our goals.

Although we have much to celebrate, we also recognize our current and projected challenges — and the impacts they will have on our district and the students we serve. Just like our families, our district is feeling the strain of increasing costs for goods and services. At the same time, ETCSD has not received any new funding from the state. In fact, the 2021-2023 state biennial budget had a zero-dollar increase in per-student funding.

This situation created a \$779,000 structural deficit for ETCSD in the 2021-22 school year and a \$1,169,069 deficit for the 2022-23 school year. If not for the use of \$779,405 in one-time federal ESSER funds, the impact to our organization would have been much greater for this school year. That said, these were one-time funds that will not be available to us in the 2023-24 school year and beyond.

In 2002, Wisconsin ranked 11<sup>th</sup> in the nation for school funding. By 2020, our state had dropped to 25<sup>th</sup> in the nation. This was the largest decline of any state over this period, per Wisconsin Public Policy Forum.

Additionally, the numbers of college students completing education degrees in Wisconsin has decreased in recent years, dropping 12.9 percent from 2011 to 2019 alone. Bachelor's degree completions decreased by 19.7% from 2011 to 2019, while master's completions decreased by 17.3%.

These numbers raise concerns over whether enough potential new teachers are entering the field. These projections also do not consider the potential effects of COVID-19.

As of the writing this letter, ETCSD has 66 new staff members for the 2022-23 school year. Of them, 37 are licensed certified staff.

Amid a historically tight labor market, reports from Wisconsin's largest public employee retirement system show that, between retirements and other exits, state and local employees left their jobs at record rates in 2021.

We must continue to create conditions that support our children and their intellectual, social, and emotional learning by preparing them to be lifelong advocate learners. As Albert Einstein stated: "Education is not about the learning of facts, but the training of the mind to think." We also must recognize that, to take care of our children, we must take care of our staff.

I look forward to all of us working together toward supporting our strategic priorities and ensuring our district goals continue to move forward for the betterment of our students, families, staff, district, and community.

Sincerely,

Dr. Christopher G. Hibner  
District Administrator