

FETC 2020

In traveling to FETC 2020, my thoughts were that I was going to be amazed by all the new technology available for schools. What I saw was so much more and was able to focus in on three specific components that could transform my school and the entire district. These three areas include: Learning Space Design, Career Pathways/Certifications, and ESports.

Learning Space Design:

We hear all sorts of reports and information on learning space design and some anecdotal evidence of how it helps students learn. I was able to attend a few sessions that dove deeper into the research and specific evidence of how learning spaces increase (or decrease) learning for all kinds of learners:

- Classroom design could be attributed to a 25% impact, positive or negative, on a student's progress over the course of an academic year. (*Building and Environment* journal)
- "The reality is, if you're sitting in an uncomfortable chair or you're distracted by glare, you're focusing on the source of the discomfort rather than the learning. The distraction is a stress, and if you're stressed, you're not learning."

As we look further into our learning spaces, something we need to do is include information from our students. What areas of our building do our students tend to migrate towards? What part of the building do students feel most comfortable learning in? A question I will be asking my staff is what three verbs do students use to describe your classroom. My goal is to have a reflective session at an upcoming inservice to discuss what those verbs are and to discuss commonalities between classrooms. Finally, we will delve into what verbs do we *want* our students to use to describe our classrooms and how can we better design our spaces to accommodate those verbs.

In addition to learning spaces, we heard a plethora of research regarding the times of day, modalities, and length of instruction where adolescents are more prone to a positive learning experience. It was no surprise when the research supported a later start time for teenagers coupled with movement times throughout the day, especially during longer class blocks, and frequent breaks.

When we think about it, learning space design, times, modalities, and breaks are all under our control as a district and individual school. With the help of our students and community stakeholders, we can take immediate, small steps to make our schools a more inviting, relaxing and powerful learning experience for all of our students.

Career Pathways/Certifications:

One of the most powerful experiences we can have is to visit other schools who have been implementing different ideas for an extended period of time. I had the opportunity to visit a "mega-magnet" and "choice" school in the Miami-Dade School District. Let me preface everything by saying the amount of resources, community access, and funding to these schools is well beyond the current level that we enjoy in our state and district. However, that does not mean we cannot examine their

model and adapt our current way of doing business to better meet the increasing demands of being life ready that our students face upon graduation.

These schools have at least eight different career pathways that students can take in order to have an opportunity to earn multiple certifications in that pathway. Students are still required to follow a set curriculum however, as they advance down their pathways, their elective classes turn towards the pathway they have chosen. For example, if a student chose an IT (information technology) pathway, the elective classes they will be taking as early as the second semester of their freshman year will be focused on preparing the students for the first battery of certifications. As the students progress along their pathways, the classes continue to build upon each other and prepare them for additional certification exams.

I understand that as individual schools, we cannot possibly provide all the career paths that a school of over 3000 students can. What we can do is examine what they do offer and scale it to our school/district size. By utilizing a schedule that is similar to what SOHI and Seward currently have, we can simultaneously give more preparation time for teachers while adding a class to their schedule as well. We would need to identify what pathways the students would be most interested in and what is most viable for our school to offer. The teachers would need some training for the different pathways along with the certification plans and curriculum/materials to help students through the certification preparation classes. I know this is a quick explanation however, it is again well within our reach to control our own progress with helping students become life ready. My plan is to type up a more formal plan to present to my staff, district office and site council in the near future.

E-Sports:

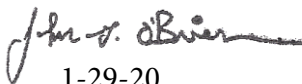
This is quickly becoming more popular with each passing day and is to the point of being legitimized as a possible career path similar to how students pursue a career in an athletic field. This could include playing/participating or coaching. The presenters outlined many different attributes to have an E-Sports team:

- Supports Student Engagement (an increase in student involvement = increase student performance)
- Drives Learning Outcomes (collaboration, problem solving, critical thinking, creativity)
- Prepares Students for Tomorrow (tech based skills, familiarity with tech tools)

Although the industry continues to grow, there are still concerns from many in the education industry. The main concern is still first person shooter games. One of the solutions that people have come up with for this concern is to have more of a "battle royale" style game. However, these types still do have a component of "killing" opponents. I do know there are many districts in the state that have E-Sports teams and is probably something we at least should look into for the future.

The overall feeling for FETC 2020 is extremely positive with research based, best practices that has a definite kid focus. Future attendees would do well with attending a FETC conference.

Respectfully Submitted,
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