

# Taking Risks

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## Spreading Our Wings...

If you have been following any of the pieces of writing I have been doing or have tuned into the podcast I do or have been following me on Twitter ([@USD363Supt@usd363](https://twitter.com/USD363Supt)), you know I have an orientation toward looking at things a bit differently to see if there are things we could be doing to build on our successes as we meet the needs of our students. The “schooling experience” today is so much more complex than when it was when I was in school so many years ago. The issues facing our students and the environment in which they live is so different. Ever heard of the little thing called the “Internet”? Well, it didn’t even exist when I was in school. (No, I am NOT any spring chicken.) From my perspective, the advent of the Internet and the general accessibility to it is akin to the production of the combustible engine – Life and the whole world is simply different.

It is with this perspective that I lead in the manner in which I do. Now, HERE is the really interesting thing about all of this. Schools are VERY slow to change – I don’t know if you have given this ANY thought at all – but have you ever really thought about WHY schools are designed as they are? I am talking about WHY there is a bell that rings at the end of every period at high school, WHY we have a Spring Break and a summer vacation, and WHY we bunch kids together in age groupings, and plenty of other “things” about school? Well, I have – A LOT as I am a true education nerd. J And, I know these “givens” are really vestibles of an archaic system that were designed for a former time and ACTUALLY impede our efforts to meet the unique learning needs of each of our students. I am NOT saying all of our structures in school aren’t necessary, but I AM DEFINITELY saying it is incumbent upon us to examine what we do and HOW we do it to see if we are squeezing the lemon as tightly as we can to get all of the juice we are able to get to help our students with their educational and maturation journeys.

Toward that end, ever since I have been in the district, I have pushed the agenda of having teachers take more risks in the classroom. In fact, during our very first time together at the beginning of the year, I made it perfectly clear to them they had the freedoms they needed to try out new ideas in the classroom. They just needed to be able to tie it to their curriculum and standards and have a REAL reason for doing it. And, I am pleased to report many of the teachers have answered this clarion call. We have a variety of learning activities and projects taking place this year that simply were not taking place in the past. Through these efforts, the students are becoming more intrinsically motivated (see last week’s letter for my thoughts on intrinsic motivation) to take hold of the learning taking place and making it their own. This is a wonderful thing to witness, and I am extremely

**proud of the teachers and the administration in the buildings as we grow our wings in this regard to leave the nest of “the way we have always done things” in the classroom.**

**As the year goes along, you will continue to see and hear about new and exciting activities in and out of the classroom (gasp). I KNOW you will be intrigued and maybe even a bit confused by this. If/WHEN that occurs, please do NOT hesitate to give me a holler. I’d love to have you come to the office and enjoy a cup of coffee with me. I will buy, and I will wax poetic about a variety of topics like Fredrick Taylor’s Scientific Management, manufacturing lines, our former agrarian-based society, the impact of WW II and a whole slew of other artifacts from the past that have a direct negative impact on our present-day schooling environment. It is riveting information – at least I think it is interesting as all get out. J**