

February Staff Development News

February 1, 2025

Message From Matt

Greetings Everyone!

Happy February! I continue to visit classrooms across our district, and I am incredibly grateful for the talented teachers and staff in each of our buildings. Last week, Jon Gordon sent out the article below (to me and millions of others!), and I found it deeply meaningful on several levels.

First, over the years, I have known several people who retired from public education, and Jon is absolutely right—those retirees who had a mission, a team, and a scoreboard thrived. Those missing even one piece of that formula often struggled. Each of us should reflect on the day when we are no longer teaching, driving the bus, or fulfilling our current roles and consider what our mission will be at that stage of life.

Second, my work revolves around our mission. I feel very connected to it, as I helped facilitate the process of its creation. However, I recognize that many of you were not in the room when we developed it, and I believe it's important for everyone to understand the story behind its formation.

Seward Public Schools Mission Statement

Seward Public Schools—a district rooted in excellence—in cooperation with family and community members, is committed to the development of the whole student and affirms that all students will have the skills to become productive, resilient, and contributing members of their community.

- **"Seward Public Schools—a district rooted in excellence"** – This is our identity. It defines what sets us apart and what we strive to be known for. We pursue excellence in all areas—academics, athletics, activities, teaching, cooking, and building relationships with the community—the list goes on. The word *rooted* is a nod to our agricultural community and the foundation of Seward's economy.
- **"Committed to the development of the whole student and affirms that all students will have the skills to become productive, resilient, and contributing members of their community."** – This is our purpose. It defines why we exist: to ensure that our students develop the skills needed to be successful, wherever their community may be. Our work in academics, mental health, service learning, and student organizations reflects this commitment.

- **"In cooperation with family and community members"** – This is how we achieve our purpose. We work alongside families and community members to ensure students receive the support they need in high-quality facilities with dedicated, high-quality staff—like all of you.

Our mission is central to everything we do, and we recognize that the SPS team carries out each aspect of it every day. The *scoreboard* may look different depending on your department or goals, but I encourage you to reflect on this: *What scoreboard matters most to you in your work at SPS?*

Thank you,
Matt

The Three Things Everyone Needs to Thrive

A floundering 20-year-old, a retired CEO and a former NFL player are all struggling for the same reason. They are missing the three things everyone needs to thrive. So, what does everyone need?

1. **A Mission:** a purpose or goal that is meaningful to you and energizes you. It gives you fuel.
2. **A Team:** a group of friends, co-workers, colleagues, or teammates that help you get better and achieve the mission.
3. **A Scoreboard:** a way to measure progress and track success, growth and mastery. It gives you focus and direction.
- 4.

Humans are wired to have these three things and if you don't have them, you will likely feel lost or struggle.

The 20-year-old had a mission when he was in high school, and it was to get good grades and get into college. But now while in college he has no idea what he wants to do with his life and no longer has a mission. He played sports in high school but no longer has a team or a great group of friends. For years his scoreboard was test scores to get into a good college and now that he achieved that he no longer has a scoreboard that drives him.

The retired CEO once had mission to build a world class company that dominated their industry. She had a leadership team and thousands of employees she worked with every day to achieve their mission. She had several scoreboards that let her know they were winning, growing revenue and gaining market share. But now the CEO doesn't have a mission that causes her to hop out of bed with excitement and enthusiasm. Golf is fun but it's not the same. She misses fighting the battles with her team and the relationships and bond they developed. And she no longer has a scoreboard that makes her feel like she is making progress.

The retired NFL player had a mission every day to get stronger, get better, play well and win the game. He had a mission every time he walked into the team facility. He had teammates that became friends and family. They battled against the competition together and supported each other off the field. The scoreboard was clear. Tackles, sacks, wins and losses, probowls, championships, contracts and money. Now the career is over. The mission is completed. He misses the comradery he had with his teammates and no longer has a scoreboard that gives his life meaning and focus.

All three of these people need a new mission. They need a new purpose to work towards that ignites and energizes them. They also need to build a new team. Relationships and connection are essential for well-being, longevity and happiness. And they all need a new scoreboard that propels them forward and makes them feel like they are accomplishing something meaningful.

My friend Thomas Williams is a former NFL player who joined our team of speakers and trainers a few years ago and has thrived as a result. He said ever since he left the NFL he's been searching for a team and he finally found one in us. He also said he had to create a new scoreboard in his life and career and now it's how many speaking engagements he can do and how many lives he can impact.

This is true for all of us and it's true for those you lead.

If you don't have a mission, find one and help others find theirs.

If you don't have a team, join a club, a book club or group with similar interests as you. Get involved in your church or local non-profit. Invest in relationships and build your team one person at a time.

If you don't have a scoreboard, create one. Decide what success looks like to you and your team. It could be a number you want to reach, or a goal you want to achieve or an impact you want to make.

I love teaching this because once you understand the need for a mission, team and scoreboard you'll be able to see when they are missing from your life and the life of others. And once you realize they are missing you can do something about it in order to thrive and also help others thrive.

Have a great week!

Jon

MTSS Podcast

Everything you would like to know about MTSS with interviews from practitioners.



Branching Minds Education Podcast - Schoolin' Around

Join the conversations with subject-matter experts and education leaders, on their perspectives and reflections on the current challenges in K-12 education

branchingminds.com

Math

Our Math Curriculum teams are focused on selecting High Quality materials- Here are some reminders about what that looks like.



How to Select a High-Quality, Equitable Math Curriculum - EdReports

Read our tips on choosing a K-12 math curriculum that fosters equity, excellence, and student agency, and discover what quality looks like in math materials.

edreports.org

Patriotic Holidays

Nebraska Revised Statute 79-724 requires the following:

Appropriate patriotic exercises suitable to the occasion shall be held under the direction of the superintendent in every public, private, denominational, and parochial school on **George Washington's birthday, Abraham Lincoln's birthday**, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday, Native American Heritage Day, Constitution Day, Memorial Day, Veterans Day, and Thanksgiving Day, or on the day or week preceding or following such holiday, if the school is in session.

George Washington's birthday is: February 22nd

Abraham Lincoln's birthday is: February 12th

President's Day is: February 17th



Matt Dominy

Matt is using Smore to create beautiful newsletters