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PRESS RELEASE

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### District 157-C implements 21<sup>st</sup> Century Continuous Learning Plan aligned to Strategic Goals

On September 21, the District 157-C Board of Education unanimously approved the implementation of a new 21<sup>st</sup> Century Continuous Learning Plan aligned to the five goals of the District's previous Strategic Plan. The goals include Growth/Learning Spaces, Student Outcomes, Professional Development, Financial Stability and Community Partnerships. The plan takes into account the feedback from students, staff and parents. It aims to prepare the students with the skills they will need for success in college and a career in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

Technology plays a major role in developing all of the characteristics for 21<sup>st</sup> Century classrooms, therefore, computers must be readily available in the classrooms. Following a teacher survey, a comprehensive professional development plan and technology integration plan was developed. Computers not only give students the means to conduct online research and master technology skills, but the added resource of computers in classrooms also give teachers the opportunity to enhance their lessons. The District is well positioned to build upon its technology base at this time. Over the years, the Board of Education has supported the District's technology program by approving a refresh of the existing computers in each building on a regular alternating cycle so existing computers are up to date for student use. Also, for the past several years the Education Foundation and Family School Partnership (FSP) have generously raised funds to provide additional technology items.

The teachers will be trained using a variety of instructional methods and following different pedagogical approaches aided with technology. The teachers will become facilitators of learning and support students as they develop critical thinking skills, effective communication skills, collaboration skills and adept technology skills.

Dr. Zinni described a future learning environment where teachers can guide students to go deeper to learn, have access to more information and become critical thinkers and writers. She continued, "The key is training the teachers and continuing their support once we have the resources to flip their classrooms to the 1:1 technology model." Hickory Creek Middle School Principal Will Seidelmann noted that a number of online programs, many of them free, are already being used in the classroom. He stated, "We have a good balance in our teaching, it is not all computer-based but has teachers teaching and kids working independently and collaboratively in teams. Computers are being used as tools, not toys, and they capture student engagement while facilitating how we teach." Along with the new classroom technology, after-school STEM clubs are also being offered to students to help prepare them for what will be demanded of them once they leave District 157-C.

Dr. Zinni stated, "This plan will become a living document and we will be able to monitor how we're doing as we see results happening." Board member Tom Reidy stated, "This plan holds the Board accountable as well. At some point down the road tough decisions will have to be made because we are committing to this plan tonight." Board President Gina Briesie agreed with Mr. Reidy, stating "This is a commitment with the Board for five years that will benefit the children their whole lives."