



# RIVER VALLEY SCHOOL DISTRICT

Mr. Philip Martell, Superintendent of Schools



March 24, 2026

**Dear River Valley Community,**

It is with deep gratitude, great pride, and certainly mixed emotions that I share my decision to retire as Superintendent of the River Valley School District, effective **June 30, 2026**.

Serving this community has been one of the greatest privileges of my life. River Valley is more than a school district; it is a family, a source of pride, and a place filled with resilience, heart, and possibility. To have had the opportunity to serve this community, work alongside our remarkable staff, and advocate for our students has been an honor I will carry with me forever.

When I think about my time here, I do not think first about titles or positions. I think about people. I think about the students who walk into our schools each day, hearts full of promise and potential before them. I think about the teachers, support staff, administrators, and school leaders who give so much of themselves in service to children. I think about our families and community members who believe in this district and want the very best for its future. It has been my privilege to stand beside all of you in this important work.

Together, we have accomplished extraordinary things. We have worked to build a school district that does not simply respond to today's needs, but one that prepares students for the opportunities of tomorrow. We created new pathways for students to explore their strengths, interests, and futures. We invested in innovation, career-connected learning, and meaningful educational opportunities that help students see what is possible for their lives.

I am especially proud of the success of the **River Valley STEAM Academy**, which has opened doors for students and created exciting, forward-thinking opportunities that are changing lives. What began as a vision became a reality because of a shared belief that our students deserve access to innovative learning experiences that prepare them not only for graduation, but for success in an ever-changing world.

I am also incredibly proud that River Valley has earned national recognition for its work. From being named an **AASA National Lighthouse School System** to being inducted into the **Digital Promise League of Innovative Schools**, our district has been recognized as a place where innovation, leadership, and student-centered learning truly matter. These are not just awards or

titles — they are affirmations of the hard work, vision, and unwavering commitment that define this community. Those recognitions belong to all of us.

But more than any honor or recognition, I am proud of the culture we have built together — a culture that believes in students, values opportunity, embraces innovation, and never loses sight of why we do this work. The true legacy of River Valley is not found in a plaque, a headline, or a designation. It is found in the lives of students who have been encouraged, inspired, and prepared for what comes next.

As I prepare for retirement, I do so with a full heart. River Valley has left a permanent mark on my life. I will always be thankful for the trust this community placed in me and for the opportunity to lead a district that is filled with such extraordinary people. While leadership will eventually transition, my belief in River Valley's future never will. I know the best days of this district are still ahead.

Thank you for allowing me to be part of this journey. Thank you for your support, your partnership, and your commitment to the children of this community. Most of all, thank you for believing in the promise of public education and in the future of River Valley.

It has been the honor of a lifetime to serve you. Panther's Now. Panther's Forever.

Yours sincerely,



Mr. Philip Martell  
*Superintendent of Schools*  
*River Valley School District*