

# New CVHS principal is no stranger to school district

By: [Nick Mordowanec](#) | [Fraser - Clinton Township Chronicle](#) | Published October 29, 2018



**Todd Distelrath**

CLINTON TOWNSHIP — On Oct. 15, the Chippewa Valley Schools Board of Education officially introduced Todd Distelrath as the new principal of Chippewa Valley High School.

He is currently being introduced to the inner workings of the high school, set to officially replace Principal Jerry Davisson, who is retiring in December.

Distelrath possesses a bachelor's degree in education from Central Michigan University; a master's degree in curriculum, instruction and leadership from Oakland University, and an education specialist degree from Oakland University.

He's been part of CVS since 2004 after teaching for seven years at St. Clair Middle School in St. Clair County. He's spent nearly 15 years at Seneca Middle School — 12 as principal and three as an assistant principal.

He said he wanted to be a teacher as long as he could remember, following the footsteps of family members — like his cousin and uncle — who were also educators. He said he thrives in a school-based atmosphere.

Presiding as a principal for children who are growing into teenagers, Distelrath said there are lessons he has learned throughout his career that will benefit him at the high school level.

"Middle school is a pretty unique and interesting age group," he said. "They're going through a lot, making the transition from being a little kid to being grown up and mature. They're on the doorstep of high school, where you really start to spread your wings and think about a future."

One of his scholastic crowning achievements has involved an emphasis on Professional Learning Community activities at Seneca. He has also facilitated school improvement goals and strategies at the building and district level.

While principal, he developed positive behavior intervention and support programs for students, encompassing schoolwide expectations, incentives and discipline. He said the PLC model has lent itself toward collaboration between students and teachers, improving instruction while implementing and sustaining higher standards.

In August, he heard about the CVHS job opening. He said it sounded like a great fit.

"I was really just looking for a new challenge, a change, looking to expand my horizons and continue to grow," he said. "We're in the growth business as educators, and I wanted to feel that personally as well."

He was involved in interviews throughout late September and early October. Six candidates were interviewed in the first round. Then, he got the great news.

“I was very excited,” he said. “It was exciting to know that I was going to start this new chapter in my career. It was a pretty substantial interview process, with a teacher group, a parent group, administrative group, school board members. Each of those different interviews, I felt a lot of positive feedback. I felt a lot of positivity from the people I interviewed with.”

He knows what he has to look forward to: students in their teen years who are experiencing many firsts in life, including many moments that are plain complicated and uncomfortable. The PLC model is one he hopes to sustain as a tool for school improvement and personal growth.

“I know it takes a great foundation to build upon, and it takes a lot of teamwork from the student themselves, the parents, the teachers to help build that foundation,” he said. “One step leads to the next, one year builds for the next. Ultimately, you want students to begin setting goals for themselves.”

Nicole Faehner will take over as Seneca’s interim principal once Distelrath officially departs. The Seneca principal position is expected to be posted in the spring.