



National Association of
School Superintendents
United in Common Purpose: Each Other's Success

Name

Dr. Tim Dilg

Current School District and Location

**Valley Park School District
St. Louis, MO**

INTRODUCTION

Dr. Tim Dilg is the Superintendent of the Valley Park School District, a visionary leader committed to fostering collaboration, innovation, student empowerment, and organizational excellence. With over two decades of experience in educational leadership, he has transformed schools by championing student-centered initiatives, building collaborative cultures, and driving systemic change that enhances learning outcomes.

A catalyst for progress, Dr. Dilg established Valley Park's inaugural **Student Advisory Team (SAT) and district podcast**, amplifying student voices and strengthening communication among students, staff, and the broader community. Under his leadership, the district completed its first **strategic planning process in over 20 years**, redefining its mission, vision, and values to ensure a bold, unified direction. He has also facilitated critical **facility upgrades and capital improvements for 100% of the district**, enhancing learning environments **for all students and staff from pre-K through 12th grade**.

Beyond his district, Dr. Dilg serves as **President of the St. Louis County Superintendents Association** and a **member of the AASA Governing Board**, advocating for policies that drive meaningful improvements in public education at both local and national levels. His commitment to **cultures of belonging, personalized learning, and student success** is evident in his leadership of a **district-wide curriculum overhaul (26 new courses)**, integrating 21st-century learning skills, and expanding career, college, and success-ready pathways. His initiatives and collaborations with staff have led to remarkable student achievements, including a **65% increase in Career and Technical Education (CTE) enrollment** and out performing state and national pass rates on AP exams.

A recognized change agent, Dr. Dilg strengthens school communities by fostering **inclusivity, leadership development, and real-world opportunities for students**. Whether expanding dual enrollment and Project Lead the Way programs, forming athletic partnerships, or exploring the launch of an **E-sports program**, he is committed to **providing students with limitless opportunities**. Through his leadership, unwavering commitment to student success, organizational excellence, and continuous growth, Valley Park continues to evolve as a **model for educational innovation, collaboration, personalized learning, and student empowerment**.

Education

Tim earned his **Doctoral Degree in Educational Leadership from Saint Louis University**, where he also obtained his Specialist Degree in Educational Leadership. He completed a **Master's Degree in Curriculum & Instruction from Drury University**, and his academic journey began at **Missouri State University**, where he earned a **Bachelor's Degree in Professional Writing**.

In addition to his formal education, Dr. Dilg earned the **National Superintendent Certification through the AASA National Superintendent Certification program**. He also obtained two coaching certifications from the Professional Coaching Academy: an Executive Coaching Certification and a Professional Coaching Certification.

Experience

Dr. Tim Dilg has served as **Superintendent of the Valley Park School District since 2019**, where he has led transformational initiatives that have strengthened academic excellence, fiscal responsibility, and community engagement. Under his leadership, the district secured a historic **73% voter approval for the largest bond issue in its history**. He spearheaded a three-year **personalized learning professional development initiative for 100% of the faculty**, revitalized core K-12 curricula, and **introduced 26 new courses, including expanded dual enrollment and career pathway options**. Dr. Dilg has also strengthened the district's commitment to inclusivity and belonging by engaging with the St. Louis Mosaic Project Ambassador School Program.

Before joining Valley Park, Dr. Dilg served as **Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources for the School District of Clayton from 2016 to 2019**, overseeing talent acquisition, leadership development, and staff retention strategies that reinforced the district's reputation for academic excellence. From **2011 to 2016, he was Principal of St. John Vianney High School**, where he led a **nationally recognized professional development initiative, Vianney 2.0**, integrating brain-based learning research and technology into instructional practices. He **expanded academic offerings with 24 new courses, including Missouri's first Project Lead the Way Computer Science Program and 12 new dual-enrollment courses**.

Earlier in his career, Dr. Dilg was **Principal of Springfield Catholic High School from 2008 to 2011, after serving as Assistant Principal and a high school English teacher and coach**. **Since 2011, he has also shared his expertise as an adjunct graduate instructor at Southwest Baptist University**, mentoring future educational leaders. Across every role, Dr. Dilg has remained committed to empowering students, educators, and communities through innovative learning models, strategic leadership, and a relentless pursuit of excellence.

Outstanding Achievement(s)

Dr. Tim Dilg was honored as the **Missouri Association of School Administrators (MASA) Emerging Superintendent of the Year (2022)**, the recipient of the prestigious **American Association of School Personnel Administrators (AASPA) Award (2019)**, the **National Catholic Excellence Award (NCEA) recipient (2015)**, and the esteemed **St. Louis High School Principal of the Year (2015)**, he has consistently demonstrated an unwavering commitment to student success, innovation, and transformational, inclusive leadership.

Under his guidance, **St. John Vianney High School** earned recognition as a **National School of Excellence, a Model School for Brain-Based Instruction, a Top 50 Catholic High School in the nation, and a Top 100 Workplace.**

His leadership propelled the **School District of Clayton to achieve Top 100 Workplace** status and **Springfield Catholic High School to be named among the Top 50 Catholic High Schools.**

A dedicated advocate for public education and community impact, Dr. Dilg serves as **an elected Missouri representative on the American Association of School Administrators (AASA) Governing Board**, the **President of the St. Louis County Superintendents Association**, and an **active board member for the National Children's Cancer Society**. His commitment to leadership development is further reflected in his completion of prestigious programs such as Leadership Missouri, Notre Dame University's Leadership Academy, and the AASA National Superintendent Certification program.

AN INTERVIEW

Tell us about how you see today's superintendent.

Today's superintendent is more than a district leader; **they are a visionary catalyst for change, a connector of people and ideas, and a relentless champion for students, educators, and communities.** At the heart of the role is an unwavering belief in student potential—**ensuring that every child has access to personalized learning experiences that prepare them holistically for limitless opportunities.** Superintendents are tasked with creating safe, supportive environments of belonging where every student feels valued, empowered, and equipped to make the world a better place.

Today's superintendent must be a developer of teacher talent, cultivating a culture where educators are inspired to innovate, collaborate, and grow. They must advocate for public education, boldly engaging policymakers and stakeholders to secure the resources and policies necessary for student success. A modern superintendent is a multiplier—one who amplifies the strengths of their team, ignites possibilities and fosters a shared vision of excellence. **They are a coach, a mentor, and a lifelong learner, continuously evolving to meet the ever-changing needs of students and communities.** Above all, today's superintendent must be a leader who inspires belief in what's possible for every student, every teacher, every school, and every community we are privileged to serve.

What new understandings did you acquire after two or three years on the job?

One of the most influential lessons I learned after my first few years as a superintendent is this: **Where you invest your energy is where you'll find your energy.**

This job is demanding, and it's easy to get lost and distracted in the noise, fires, politics, and weight of the daily grind. But if you intentionally **look for wins, seek solutions, and invest in people**, you'll find that your energy is not just sustained—it's renewed.

1. **Look for Wins** – No matter how tough a situation is, there is always progress happening. A student who succeeds, a staff member who grows, a problem solved—celebrating these wins builds momentum and keeps you and your team motivated.
2. **Be a Solution Seeker** – Challenges will always exist, but leaders who bring solutions instead of dwelling on problems create a **culture of progress**. Approach every issue with, *"What can we do? What's the next best step?"* Your mindset will set the tone for your district.
3. **Invest in People** – The most rewarding part of this work is helping others grow. Staff who feel valued and supported will go above and beyond for students and the district. Take time to listen, mentor, and develop your team—this will be the greatest return on investment.

And perhaps most importantly, **the magic is in the margins**. It's in the moments that don't make the agenda or social media but define the culture—checking in with a principal after a tough day, helping a student in the lunch room, taking a minute to acknowledge a custodian's hard work, and listening when a parent needs to be heard. **The small moments are what make the big moments possible**—a conversation in the hallway, a handwritten note, an extra word of encouragement—are what truly shape a culture of trust and growth. These small, intentional acts build trust, strengthen relationships, and create momentum for real and sustainable change. **Every inch toward continuous improvement counts**. Whether it's refining a process, supporting a struggling teacher, or making a facility upgrade that improves daily life—every effort, no matter how small, makes a difference in the lives of the students, staff, and communities we serve.

The superintendency can be overwhelming if we allow it, but if you focus your energy on the right things, you'll not only sustain yourself but also create a culture where your team thrives and your district moves forward—one meaningful, magical step at a time.

Share an idea to use or something you've learned with your colleagues.

One idea I've found effective in fostering more open and honest dialogue and collaborative conversations among teams is using a simple tool called ESPZ (I believe the Airbnb founders created it). This framework helps teams engage more easily in conversations and helps address important but often avoided topics by using memorable labels for different conversation types.

ESPZ stands for:

- **Elephants:** Big issues everyone is thinking about but no one is discussing.
- **Squirrels:** Distractions that divert attention from what matters most.
- **Porcupines:** Sensitive topics that feel difficult to tackle.

- **Zombies:** Ongoing issues that keep resurfacing without resolution.

I've used it as a starter activity for meetings, strategic plan sessions, and workshops, and as an exit ticket to get a pulse of my team before exiting a room. It's always available for my team to use when they see fit, even if it is not on the agenda. It also works like a "permission slip" to bring up tough subjects in a safe, non-confrontational way. For example, a team member might say, "I have a porcupine," signaling that they want to talk about a delicate issue, and everyone knows to approach it with care. The key is to use this framework to normalize these conversations, so they don't derail progress or get ignored.

This tool can be used in any team discussion, from meetings to brainstorming sessions. It doesn't require a formal process but can help people stay focused and make faster progress on important issues. The beauty of ESPZ is that it doesn't just address problems—it also fosters transparency and helps move teams beyond just "niceness" towards real, productive conversations.

The framework encourages teams to bring up difficult topics by labeling them, which makes the conversation less personal and more solution-focused. You can also add **Chimpanzees** to the tool—**this would cover things like celebrations, shout-outs, or positive reminders, ensuring a balance of appreciation and progress.**

Start small by introducing the framework with a few team members and use real examples to make it relatable. As people get comfortable, you'll likely see an increase in honest, constructive dialogue and a culture of openness.

Submitted by:



April 3, 2025

Name/Signature

Date