

# Building a Positive Culture Through Targeted, Positive Feedback During Classroom Visits

By: Sandy Myers, Silver Creek Primary

Contact: [smyers@westclarkschools.com](mailto:smyers@westclarkschools.com)

## **Background That Led to Your Inquiry:**

As the principal of Silver Creek Primary my role is to lead the teachers to provide classroom engaging environments where everyone can achieve their personal best. At Silver Creek Primary we have 22 dedicated educators who work extremely hard daily. I wanted to increase the morale of the teachers while honoring their passion for meeting the needs of all children.

I knew from the research that I should be in classrooms one hour a day four days a week. Being that I do not have an assistant principal, I was being pulled in multiple directions and not meeting that goal. I believe being present in classrooms, providing positive specific feedback is critical for a positive culture.

Therefore, the purpose of my action research was to determine how providing targeted, positive feedback to teachers will impact our school culture.

## **Statement of Your Wondering:**

With this purpose, I wondered, "How as a teacher can I make certain I am in classrooms, providing specific positive feedback for a minimum of one hour a day four days a week?"

## **Methods/Procedures:**

To gain insights into my wondering, I blocked out an hour each day to dedicate to time in the classrooms. My secretaries knew that this time is sacred and I am not to be interrupted unless it is an emergency. At first, I blocked out the same time each day, but soon changed the time frame because I wanted to see different curriculum and times of the day.

When providing the feedback I focused on specific positive aspects to what I was observing. I looked for student engagement, use of technology, and positive interactions with the students. I left notes in the classrooms, sent follow up emails, and wrote thank you cards for going above and beyond. I took pictures of these notes and tracked my observation and feedback left on a Google Spreadsheet.

I also wanted to track what was keeping me from reaching my goal of an hour a day. So I created a Google Sheet that tracked the different distractors that happen which prevented me from being in the classroom for the hour each day. I then color coded the spreadsheet to determine what was happening the most frequently.

Throughout this time, I began to notice my notes left on the teacher's desks or on their computer. The cards I sent were sitting on their desk. Teachers began talking about their thank you card. They were sharing with each other the praise they were getting. Several staff members stopped by my office or sent me an email saying how much the note meant to them.

## **Stating Your Learning and Supporting it with Data:**

As a result of analyzing my data, three important things I learned include:

1. Teachers desire feedback and want authentic praise.
2. I need to schedule the time (one hour a day) in classrooms to ensure this time is prioritized in my daily routines.
3. Providing positive feedback will create a more positive culture in a building.

Teachers desire feedback and want authentic praise. We all like to hear that we are doing a good job. Teachers put their heart and soul into their students. They attend workshops, read blogs, create lessons, and collaborate with each other over data. They need to hear from their administrator that what they are doing is working. They need to be acknowledged for their passion and dedication. By spending time in their classrooms and sitting with teams during their PLCs, I could easily find a focus for specific feedback. I was aware of everyone's positive contribution to the team and shared my gratitude for their commitment to meeting the needs of all their students instructionally, behaviorally, and emotionally.

As the leader I must prioritize my daily routines in order to ensure I spend one hour a day in classrooms as suggested by research. I want to be the best instructional leader possible. Scheduling this time allows me to put my focus in the correct area, the classrooms. Being present during PLCs and in classrooms has improved the culture and my relationships with the teachers. The teachers appreciate the positive specific praise. Some samples of the responses I received are:

- I just opened your card and I want you to know that you are so welcomed. I was just walking out to recess one day and I thought...SCP would be a great place to do a project.

- Aww...thank you SO much! I absolutely love having her and being here each day!!! It is a great place to be for sure!!! Thank you for sending such kind words!! Not that they are needed, but always appreciated!! :)

- Teaching LONG rope to kindergartners is definitely a challenge...getting all three to work cooperatively and turn and get the timing down to jump takes skill. But, some groups never cease to amaze me! Seeing the improvement from K to first is such a rewarding part of my job!!!! I had a first grade boy get 27 in a row (talk about being proud of himself....he was on cloud nine and so was the rest of the class for him!). Thanks for taking part in our fun!!!!

- awww....you just made my day! Thank you!!

- AWE, thanks!! I needed that;)

## **Providing Concluding Thoughts:**

I know that my most important role in the school is to be present in classrooms and during PLCs. Being a part of the collaboration allows me to provide positive specific feedback that the teachers desire. The positive notes have uplifted teachers and motivates them to continue meeting our students needs. I hold myself and my school to high expectations. It is my duty to ensure these high expectations are being met in each classroom.

Also, as the leader of the building, I enjoy my time spent with the students and teachers. I did not become a teacher to answer emails, create schedules, and put out fires. I became an educator to work with children and make a positive impact on their lives. Through this project, I have found that I feel more productive when I am out seeing the wonderful happenings in my building.

In the future, I will continue to schedule one hour a day for classroom time. I plan to create a Google Calendar where I can block off an hour a day to spend in classrooms providing positive feedback. I will continue to leave positive notes for the teachers. I feel that the thank you cards and personal notes left after a classroom visit were the most impactful. I will begin each 9 weeks with labeled envelopes for each teacher. As I write a thank you, I will use the envelope. By the end of the quarter, each teacher will receive at least one hand written thank you card from me. Also, I plan on meeting with each teacher at the beginning of the year to communicate and set a professional goal for each of them. During my visits, I will be looking for ways to comment and provide feedback on their professional goal.

### **References:**

DuFour, R., & Eaker, R. E. (2009). Professional learning communities at work: Best practices for enhancing student achievement. Moorabbin, Vic.: Hawker Brownlow Education.