

My Role as a Positive Communicator (Teacher Cheerleader)

By: Jay Wildman, North Elementary

Contact: jwildman@wcs.k12.in.us

Background That Led to Your Inquiry:

I noticed that the teacher stress level in our building was through the roof. I wanted to know if there was anything that I could do to help relieve some of the stress. Therefore, the purpose of my action research was to see what I could do to improve communication of appreciation to the staff.

Statement of Your Wondering:

I have noticed through observations, reports from other teachers, teacher retention statistics, and teacher attendance rate data, that teacher morale is low throughout the state. If there were a stress meter in our building it would show the building to be at the “dangerous” level.

With this purpose, I wondered, “Am I doing enough as a leader to create a working environment that fosters a positive culture in our school and can I help make teachers feel more appreciated?”

Methods/Procedures:

To gain insight into my wondering, I talked with our building “events” leader about several ideas for ways to get everyone together outside of school with families. (bowling, movie night, Christmas party, cookout, putt-putt golf). We also scheduled monthly pitch-ins during lunchtime.

I had a catered lunch served near the Christmas Holidays to show my appreciation to the staff.

I sent my own “Praiseworthy” notes to teachers bragging on something they improved upon, did for our students, or did for our school.

Stating Your Learning and Supporting it with Data:

My data was the notes I received back from teacher or the positive verbal comments I received from the teachers. I also tracked attendance at the pitch-ins and other events that were held throughout the school year.

Providing Concluding Thoughts:

- I learned that teachers do want/need to be appreciated by their building leader.
- I learned that while I do appreciate teachers, they want to hear it from their leader! They want it verbalized.
- I learned teacher’s moods/attitudes can improve if they feel appreciated by their leader.
- I learned that I need to make more of an effort to praise teachers all of the time.
- I learned that I feel better and my mood improves when I have praised teachers.

- I learned that I can improve our school climate and culture with simple frequent praise.
- I learned that when we get together outside of the school setting we grow as a team. We learn to like each other more and grow in our appreciation of what each of us is going through in life.
- I saw our number of teachers participating in “get-togethers” increase throughout the year. I think some who didn’t participate earlier felt like they were missing out on the fun.
- I learned that when I had to have a difficult conversation with a teacher it went better if I had previously “deposited” a positive comment and built a positive rapport with the teachers.

References:

N/A