

The Power of Celebration

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Background That Led to Your Inquiry:

Over the summer, guest speaker, Pedro Noguera, changed the way I look at my leadership practices. The picture of the cobblestone path with a puddle reflecting a castle reminded me that I tend to be a head down, get “stuff” done administrator. I need to look up every now and then to see the awesome things that go on in my building and community.

I would like to change my attitude and actions in my daily approach as principal of Seeger Memorial Jr. – Sr. High School. Therefore, the purpose of my action research project was to focus on celebrating the big and little accomplishments of every student and staff member. I hope my actions will magnify the wonderful education climate we have at Seeger.

Statement of Your Wondering:

With this purpose, I wondered if the change in my leadership style from a data driven, sometimes “nose to the grindstone” approach to a more empathetic celebratory leader would impact the climate of Seeger Memorial positively.

Methods/Procedures:

To make sure I continue to celebrate, I created the SHS twitter page. My first tweet was August 9th and I currently have 237 followers, 315 posts, and over 70,000 impressions. My goal is to post a tweet every school day, which I have well surpassed. I now find myself leaving my office to find something a student or staff member is doing that I can share with our community to showcase the great school we have. Twitter is my first attempt at social media and it has also given me a forum to read up on some educational leaders, including Mr. Noguera.

I have also used Annette Breaux’s strategies during our staff PLCs on Monday mornings. I have implemented the “Ten-Minute Inservice” to improve teacher effectiveness. Though Breaux’s practices focus on how to respectively treat students, those practices can be mirrored with administrator/staff relationships. I have also scheduled Breaux for our district summer professional development days.

Stating Your Learning and Supporting it with Data:

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

- Having large student celebrations and posting accomplishments on social media has increased the positive buzz in our educational community and in our county.
- Organizing staff “get togethers” has promoted comradery between administration, teachers, and support staff members.
- Sharing building information in a timely manner and sticking to schedules has proven to have a positive impact on the staff.

Providing Concluding Thoughts:

Through this process, I have grown as an administrator. I have always considered myself to be an efficient, get-stuff-done kind of guy, always looking out for what is in the best interest of my students first and my staff second. I have never been afraid of hard work or putting in the time and effort it takes to dig through data, make curriculum changes, explore depth of knowledge, manage the response to interventions, or handle the discipline issues that disrupt the educational process.

However, I was not enough of an empathetic and celebratory leader for my staff and students. They need and deserve someone to lift them up and remind them why education is important and return to that sense of wonderment that comes in learning and exploring new topics. I still have many hats to wear but am focusing more on celebrating successes in my building daily.

The teachers in my building work hard to analyze their data, develop curriculum, inspire higher level thinking, and encourage student growth and learning. The feedback provided from the survey tells me that they also appreciate getting together on paydays or special occasions to enjoy a meal together, celebrate each other, and enjoy the camaraderie that comes from working in a small school. They value the use of technology, like the Remind App, to ease communication. Finally, they participate enthusiastically in student success celebrations that revolve around diagnostic and standardized testing that drives our curriculum and instruction.

References:

Breaux, A. & Whitaker, T. (2013). *The Ten-Minute Inservice: 40 Quick Training Sessions that Build Teacher Effectiveness*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Noguera, P. (July, 2, 2013). IPLI ISU Conference Speaker: Excellence Through Equity.