HAWK REPORT: OCTOBER 2012

Last week I had the opportunity to attend the WSASCD Conference in Seattle. There are many things you can learn from a conference. Some sessions were thought provoking, while others needed some work. One of the best things about a conference is the opportunity to learn what other schools are doing to help students learn. One of the themes that I kept hearing was how to fix problems in their buildings. What was missing was the trust between all stakeholders. When one school was telling me about how they were hopeful about getting people to work together using the STAR Protocol, I was thinking about my staff at the time. We used this protocol over five years ago for a short time. What I realized was that our staff have built the trust needed with each other to make the changes needed to help our students. You can't have an outside expert develop that for you, it has to come from within. The staff and I have to be able to say the following statements, "I don't know how.... and "Can you help me?" It takes a lot to get there and be that vulnerable to each other. I am proud of my staff for taking that journey with me many years ago as it has built a strong, united team with our kids being the beneficiaries of this cohesivensess. I left the conference feeling very proud of my staff.

This month our goal has been all about improving the partnership between the school and parents. Our October 2nd, I met with 20 parents to address a growing concern with kids struggling in school and the ways that they are choosing to cope with their stress, including drugs, alcohol, cutting and suicide. My approach was as stated in the first paragraph. "I don't know the best way to support our kids" so I asked the parents to help. This night turned out to be an amazing, thought provoking night lead by our host, Emily Hancock who shared her struggles over the last year. Emily's courage as well as her parents created a safe place for parents to share their concerns. Parents left feeling supported especially those who have students who are struggling. This meeting was attended by a smaller group as we wanted to create a plan for a much larger forum in November. Our goal for this group is

* Start talking about the issues that we do not feel comfortable talking about
* Break down the walls of isolation in our community and create safe harbors for parents to discuss thier concerns with each other.
* Create community led support systems including support groups and resources to support our parents and students in any struggle that a child has whether it is academic or social.

The very next morning, LCMS hosted a parent tour of the school. Parents were made aware of our goals for our school with a strong emphasis on students thinking and reflecting in the classroom so that they can advocate for thier own learning. I emphasised the importance of having conversations with students about thier learning instead of their grades. Mrs. Kipp presented a reflection log that students are using in classrooms. We then took parents on a tour of the school. When parents toured we asked them to focus on whether or not our students were involved in learning activities that were of high cognitive demand, had student to student flow of information and learning trust. At the end of the tour, parents were asked to reflect on their own learning. Many said that they now understood better the importance of focussing on learning instead of just grades. This was a very important thought for them to leave with.

During the week of the 15th, we will be hosting Parent Teacher Conferences. Our goal as a staff this year is to give parents more constructive feedback. Instead of success being defined by effort, grades and assignment completion, the goal is to be more specific. This many include comments such as:
" Your student is successful at adding voice in their writing"
" Your child needs to work on completing each step of the math process"
We are hoping that by doing this, parents leave with a much better understanding of what thier child is successful at as a learner and what they can work on to become an even better learner.

Fall sports have recently wrapped up. The cross country team once again dominated the field. They will be going to districts next week as a heavy favorite. The 8th grade football team was undefeated this season as well. Thanks to all of our participants in football, volleyball and cross country and also to their hard working coaches.
Mrs. Broten's leadership class has been working hard. They have been raising money for the Quinn Driscoll Foundation by selling cookies at lunchtime. The Quinn Driscoll Foundation raises money for heart screenings for teenagers as well as buying AEDs for schools. This is our kids' way to continue honoring Cody Sherrell. The leadership students were also trained in peer suicide prevention. This was practical advice that will be shared with students in advisory classes. The presenter, Mary Jadiwiski, also met with staff after school to advise them of the prevention strategies as well.
This month has been one of reflection so it would not be right to end without doing so. Success happens in a school when there is a strong community to support our kids. There have been many examples this month to remind me of that. We are determined to continue strenghtening the connection between all of our stakeholders. This is a great community and we should never take that for granted.

GO HAWKS
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