HAWK REPORT: OCTOBER 2009

Normally I would start off with something relatively witty. I almost thought about taking a crack at some of my admin peers in regards to their last board reports, or lack thereof but I thought for a change I would start on a serious note.

I had a pretty sobering experience at the parent teacher conference last week. Around 7:45 on the Thursday night of Parent Teacher conferences I was feeling pretty good about the state of LCMS. Parents were very pleased about how their child is doing at school and they appreciated the efforts to make the school a place that kids enjoy. It is easy to walk around and say that all is well at LCMS. I was feeling just that way. Then a parent came up to me and showed me her child's WASL scores. The scores were low and the parent wanted to know how I could help her child pass the WASL/MSP by the time she is in the tenth grade. While I was pleased with our growth on state tests last year this is little consolation to a parent whose child is struggling. My response was at this stage, "I do not know". My answer really troubled me and I am sure it was not the answer that she wanted to hear. My next response was 'I don't know yet.' While this report talks about a lot of the things that we accomplished in October I hope it shows that we are trying whatever it takes to help all of our kids succeed. We may not have all the answers yet but we are laying the foundation to solve the problems that hinder students learning.

One of the areas that we continue to work on is making LCMS a place that students are proud of and want to be involved in. Our staff is committed to make sure that we praise students when they are doing well and making parents aware of student success. We have implemented a green slip this year which teachers send me when a student has done something well. The students have to come to my office while I praise them on the phone to their parents. While some kids may think it is a little embarrassing, I can tell that they are feeling pretty good about themselves. It is a good experience for me as some of these students have never set foot in my office before so it helps create a relationship with them.

We have just completed our first session of athletics. All of our teams did a great job representing the blue and white. I was so glad to see so many students coming out to participate. The highlight of the season on the field was the unbeaten cross country team. For me the highlight was the way all of our athletes conducted themselves from the positive attitude in the classroom to the way they dressed themselves on game days. I appreciate the efforts of all our coaches for promoting the student part of being a student athlete and the importance of being a good citizen.

This week has been fun with Spirit Week. Our students and staff enjoy dressing up and being silly. I think that is one of the reasons why I enjoy the students here so much. They are in no hurry to grow up and enjoy just being their age and being a little goofy. The week culminated with our Thriller Nite dance. Thanks to Mrs. Broten, Mrs. Austad, Mrs. den Boer and the leadership team for all of their hard work coordinating the week.

The opportunities for our students to have a voice in their school and proudly represent the blue and white have transferred into a positive working culture. I continue to be impressed by the business like attitude that the students take with their learning. As principal it has been nice to spend more time on working with students and staff and less time dealing with discipline issues because the issues have been minimal.

Our parent teacher conferences were successful with another large turn out. The feedback that I received from parents and teachers was that parents and students are pleased with how the year has started. I do appreciate the parental support that we receive here. Over the years I have found that our parents are advocates for their children and come with an attitude of how can I help which is so important. As stated earlier our staff may not have all the answers that parents need but they are certainly willing to support us to help their children.

In our question to make our instruction meet the needs of all students our staff has been working hard to improve our instructional practice. We have ten teachers involved in the lab classroom project. This round we went and observed Mr. Ecklund and Mr. Brother's classroom. I was in the group led by Mrs. Schneider. Once again, I have seen how constructive feedback and some minor adjustments in lessons can significantly change the learning opportunities for students. Teachers come away from this experience with new ideas to implement in their classroom. Lesson Studies allow teachers to talk about their practice and create ideas that are easy to implement and do not waste valuable educational time and improves the instruction for the students. We are committed to refining this process as it makes such a difference.

Following a similar model to the lesson study, six teachers and I have started an assessment study group. Our goal is to analyze student's responses to our assessments whether it is a test or assignment. We are hoping that through this process we can not only improve the quality of our assessment but start seeing trends of student deficiencies and find ways to help students improve. We are also looking at some case study students where we analyze their progress through assessment throughout the year. Our goal is to find simple ways for teachers to diagnose student learning deficiencies, intervene and provide instructional support to help children succeed.

Two months down and I could not be happier with our start. Have a great month. Turkey and mashed potatoes are not that far away.

Go Hawks,

David Cooke
Principal
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