Hawk Report: November 2011

There is a lot to be thankful for as we enter the holiday season. First, I am grateful for employment as this is something that many are not as fortunate to have. I am also thankful to come to a job that I love to do and enjoy the people that I work with. Finally, I get to watch a group of wonderful kids in our community just trying to work it all out and build their own foundation for success. Thank you to the La Center School District and Community.

As we hit Thanksgiving it is safe to say that it has been busy and at times a little hectic. We are starting to see the impact of the large surge in kids this year. We are currently reviewing how to operate our lunch times and facilities use to deal with so many students in a confined space. As always, the staff and I will discuss the options and work it out.

The Veteran's Day Assembly was well attended again this year. For the first time the 6th grade band was able to play so this was exciting for them. I appreciate how serious the staff and students take the assembly. There are many people to thank for this starting with Mr.Calabrese and Mrs.Slinkard for their work with the band and choir students. As always Mr. Pritchett does a sterling job for coordinating the entire event. One of our parents Mrs. Harris provided a wonderful spread of coffee and treats for our Veterans. Finally I would like to thank the Veterans for not only coming to our assembly but for all they have done for this country.

Joe Bosch and I have continued to work on our student learning study to assess the success of our students as they go through middle school. Through our learning, we have come up with the following hypothesis to explore. "Are students who advocate for their own learning, more successful then students who don't?" When observing students, we have noticed that students who are successful get the most out of the learning environment. They ask their peers and teachers questions, they contribute in groups and utilize all resources to further their understanding. Other students in our study tend to hold back and struggle to communicate their needs for learning. In our in-service with staff we discussed the conditions that impact students being more confident learners and advocating for their learning. The three areas that we are focusing on are; the value of the learning for the students, the risk that they have to take to further their learning and the support that the students get in the classroom to further their learning.

To learn from our staff about these concepts and to get their assistance for our study, Joe and I created a creative learning environment for our staff. If there is one area that a person has to find value in something, take risks and feel supported and encouraged it is in the world of dating. So we created our own speed dating opportunity for our staff. Staff was encouraged to bring an example of a new idea they are working on to the in-service plus their current problem of practice. Each teacher had two minutes to see what another teacher was doing and then had to move on to the next teacher. After ten 'dates' they were asked to review what they saw and valued and then picked two people to spend

more time with to learn from. The purpose of the exercise was to encourage staff to think about what they value as a learner, take risks and be involved in a safe environment. This led into a discussion about how our students doing the same thing and the impact on them. The staff then helped Joe and I consolidate our thinking on our research and give us some direction on future work. It was extremely beneficial to all staff members and a great way to spend our Friday afternoon.

Wrestling and girls basketball started this month and I am not only pleased with how they are performing but the number of people coming out to support them. This is just another indication that the blue and white means a great deal to this community.

I wish you all a wonderful Thanksgiving time with your family. There is a lot to be grateful for in La Center.

Sincerely,

David Cooke
Principal
La Center Middle School