HAWK REPORT: NOVEMBER 2009

The end of the November month is not only a celebration of Thanksgiving but is also a significant milestone for our kids as they have finished one third of the school year. There are little things that remind me of how wonderful a year it has been. A great example of that is my discipline file. I have yet to put the alphabetical dividers in it because there are not enough names to warrant that. I thought about that lately; why we have seen such a change over the last two years. I think that it has to do with the approach that the kids have at the school. They know that they have ownership in the school and that they represent themselves and their families every day.

I was discussing with Mark Mansell the other day how we should change the terminology of rules to standards. School rules are conditions set by adults to tell students to follow a certain way to behave and act. Standards are what our students tend to live by. They know what the right thing to do is and they don't need many reminders from us. I have been impressed by the number of times that student will come to me or a teacher and say we have a problem and we want your assistance and guidance to address this. They want to be a part of the solution to help their peers make good choices. Unfortunately, this can be seen as 'snitching' but our kids see it differently. They don't want students making poor choices that impact the school and they have no problems addressing it with me. This is another example of why it is a great place to work.

This month I continue my regular chats with local sports equipment reps about buying more uniforms as more kids are coming out for athletics. I appreciate the work that Aaron McCoy and our coaches have made to make sure that all students get an opportunity to participate. Our wrestling numbers are getting bigger due to the growing numbers of girls coming out to wrestle. There have been a number of shell-shocked boys from opposition teams leaving the mat after taking on our girls.

November would not be complete without our annual Veteran's Day assembly. The morning and evening performances were packed to the rafters with students, veterans and community members paying their respect. Thanks to Mr. Pritchett, Mrs.Slinkard and Mr. Calabrese for a heartfelt assembly. The many veterans that I spoke to were very touched by not only the assembly but how respectful the students were. Thanks also to Cathy Peterson for preparing the coffee and treats after the assembly for the veterans.

Our staff continues to work on ways to improve their practice. We had three more Lesson Studies this month. I got to play the opposite role this month where I was the teacher and the staff watched me teach. This was an enlightening experience to be on the other foot and it reminded me how much fun it is to be able to teach kids. I have been teaching a class for two weeks for one period a day as another teacher is absent and while it has been a lot of work I have enjoyed kicking off the rust and working with the students.

The assessment group has also been meeting to address ways to improve assessment and addressing areas of concerns that students show in their work This month we worked on

developing proficient standards for classroom presentations. Each teacher also brought in some completed tests to see if they addressed our learning targets for the students. It is just amazing when teachers just sit down and talk together about their profession, how much we can achieve.

I have often said in my staff meetings that I am not the smartest person in the room and meetings like this validate this theory over and over. I am privileged to work with such a dedicated and intelligent group of teachers.

I hope that you all have a wonderful Thanksgiving. I look forward to writing next month's letter provided I survive my annual trek on my roof to put up Christmas lights. Putting up lights in the middle of winter is something this Aussie lad is still coming to terms with. Wish me luck.

GO HAWKS

David Cooke
Principal
La Center Middle School