HAWK REPORT: MARCH 2012

If there is one piece of advice that I could give to any principal, I would say that you can't learn about your school sitting in the office. This month I have had many opportunities to chat with kids about their learning and it has been quite eye opening. You can learn a lot if you are willing to listen to a kid, especially those who lack a filter.

Even though we have not had a leadership class this year, the students and staff have found a way to make sure that student voice is still strong in the school. There has been a small group of dedicated students who have help run assemblies and make sure events like the Doernbecher Rally are successful. I would also like to acknowledge Andrea Austad, Janice Broten and Katie Tyrrell for giving up many of their lunch breaks to work with the kids. This month the staff raised over $6,100 for Doernbecher which I believe is a record for us. The students and community have shown their compassion again and we are glad to support such a worthy cause. Dayton Erickson will be principal for the day next week as he raised $800. I was shocked as I am pretty sure my job isn't worth that much so I will have to spice it up for him next week. For the third time, the winner is a tuba player so I will be sabotaging the band once again. Mr. Calabrese will most likely send me off to the percussion section again where I can do the least damage to his band that day. I always enjoy this day as it reminds me what it is like to be a student in our school.

Our students did very well at the LCRMEA music festivals again. The band played at Discovery Middle School. I was impressed by not only how they played but how they conducted themselves while at Discovery. I saw some other schools bands accompanied by frazzled directors who could not get their kids to be respectful in the hallways. I never have to worry about that with our kids. The band was third in the completion, mere points behind the winners with much bigger programs. I am a little biased. I always think they are number one.

We hosted the LCRMEA choir festival for the second year in a row. This is a great event as we get to see many talented choirs. It also allows other students, parents and teachers to see our school. Mrs. Slinkard and her class were great hosts. The PE team of the elementary and middle schools were once again flexible as the gym was not able to be used for three days as we had night concerts as well.

This month I was able to meet with my study group and my Educational Leadership students to ask them about their experiences so far. The lesson that I learned was what students really see as valuable. This is something that I will be sharing more with staff. The kids make a lot of sense. We all need to be open to listening to it.

This last week was enlightening for me as we had our annual Student Led Conferences. The attendance for the conference was 99% of students and parents. The conferences were a great

opportunity for me to learn about how our students are learning and what they find valuable. The main thing that stuck with me was how students gauge their success. I heard the following comments a lot regarding why they did well on a project.

“I gave 100%”

“I studied harder”

“I put a lot of effort into it”

“I got an A”

“The teacher gave me a good grade”

The problem that the students ran into was when I asked them what these comments mean. Most didn’t know what “Study Harder “meant. They also assume that if they put in more effort that the work will be better. Students also assume that they get a good grade if they put effort into it. There is a disconnect between their efforts and learning. When I showed their students a piece of their work and asked them why they think they got the grade they got or how they improved, they were stuck.

What was really interesting about this was when I emailed the staff to see if they were having the same experiences, they said yes. This will be a major focus of our staff learning over the next year. Students must have learning opportunities so that they can own their learning and understand how they are growing as learners. They are currently getting validation from an external source which is a grade. This will require staff, students and parents to be on the same page to change the conversations us are having about what is valuable in education.

On Thursday the 22nd after the student led conferences were over, I met with my new Parent Advocacy Group. Overall the parents were pleased with how the conferences went. I discussed my concerns about what I saw in the conferences and they agreed that they were hearing the same thing from their parents. This led into a great conversation about how we talk to our kids about learning. Are students so focused on grades because parents are? The parents agreed to start focusing on learning by asking their kids about what they were learning in class. They would also ask to see their child’s work and ask them what they did well on the assignment or what they could improve on. The conversations won’t change until our stakeholders don’t have a shared viewpoint.