



Mentor Meeting Notes - 10.15.09 Elementary & Middle Schools

The facilitator opens the meeting by asking the participants how they are feeling currently and to share by giving a physical sign (no verbal exchanges) that demonstrates their mood, using the following gestures:

Feeling great, ready to seize the day - Thumbs Up

I'm feeling alright and ready for the day - Neutral Fist

I'm not doing so well at this time, not in a great mood – Thumbs Down

The facilitator then moves into the meeting by asking each person to report out on a recent success they have experienced so far in the school year.

Successes:

- Staff members are now greeting each other by name in the hallways and around the building, the students are starting to pick up on it and are learning more staff members' names and using them as a result – helping to create a more friendly, welcoming environment.
- Our school had a successful district kick off meeting, we (the district mentors) spent one hour with each school steering committee and those meetings included a team building activity.
- Successful launch of new advisory program, every Wednesday after lunch for grades 5/6, every Wed and Fri for grades 7/8 (1 teacher with 12-13 students), some mandatory lessons, some choice (example: using inspirational videos with discussion), the transition to the new program has been a collaborative process to gain buy in, we plan to develop a survey to gain feedback from the staff about the advisory program.
- CREE school climate survey that was done last spring helped get more buy in from staff, and then the steering committee decided to send out another survey (using survey monkey) to get focused feedback on our school's Social Emotional Character Development (SECD) initiative and to find out from the staff how it's going.
- Personal conversations with staff has helped address buy in, 3 character assemblies are being planned for the year, committee members serve as role models for the other teachers.
- Personal invitation extended to new committee members, in some ways our school staff is still struggling with buy in, realizing more and more how this work takes baby steps, trying to keep things in perspective.

- School had a day long professional development program, ½ of the day focused on SECD which demonstrates the school's investment in learning more about the fundamentals of our initiative, this led to more buy in and was helpful in legitimizing our work and the time spent up to this point, the second half of the day focused on the launch of our new advisory program and differentiated instruction, this day of learning provided seamless integration of all 3 focus areas for the school (SECD, advisory program, and differentiated instruction).
- We welcomed new steering committee members this year, including 1 new parents (now we have 2 parent reps on our committee), and we are looking forward to developing plans for parent involvement and feedback.
- It has been a challenging start to the school year due to new building, the steering committee created a binder filled with recommended activities to teach character traits, now we need to focus on staff members and community building
- Moving into a new building is an opportunity to really focus on community building among our staff.
- Our principal started the school year by passing around a stuffed bobcat, the school's mascot, (BOB) and gave it to a staff person who exhibited one of our school's character traits, used as a morale booster and a way to point out when staff actions are aligned with the initiative. We will use BOB to recognize good deeds, and it helps kick off staff meetings, effective use of humor and fun.
- Staff demonstrated resiliency by dealing positively with building move, approached chaos in a positive way, more opportunities to get to know each other, baby shower for staff member, lots to celebrate, now that we are in the new building we can begin to focus on the initiative
- 3 new committee members joined our team, exciting year so far, buy in level seems high at this point.
- Focus on 5 character traits for the year, Teamwork was topic for Sept, staff assembled a quilt and presented this to students (demonstration of teamwork) , 4 committee members came up with idea, every staff member in the building participated, and the change in our building principal has been embraced in such a positive manner by staff.
- Enjoyed reconnecting with everyone at the beginning of the school year, feels re-inspired and recharged for the year
- Increasing numbers among committees, people are asking for additional meetings to continue developing goals, new system in place for taking minutes (rotation/shared responsibility for this task), structured documentation process, we will be able to refer back to our notes and that will be helpful to track progress.

- Hosted a “hot topic” discussion before school one morning in the beginning of the year, sponsored by the committee and open to all staff members, (topic: growing up now is different from when we were growing up and in school, used 21st century learning you tube video to open discussion), 30 people attended.

Challenges:

- How to build membership on the committee?
- Our school created subcommittees and everyone got to choose what they wanted to be involved in, one person from each group gets to attend the workshops and they will share learning. We recognize that team building and increased buy in takes time and personal contact when we can have conversations about the initiative, asking people to get involved and making a personal ask has been effective. We make people feel welcome at any part of the meeting they can attend.
- Learning to ask people for their help and reconciliation of the fact that our school takes baby steps, staff still getting used to new administrator.
- Increasing numbers of staff involved, we are struggling with not being able to send all committee members to workshops, therefore we implemented the buddy system to share learning with those who cannot attend workshops.
- After attending the workshop on transformational leadership, I better understand the difference between transactional and transformational leadership, this realization was profound and helped me rethink my role as a teacher. I struggle with not having an opportunity in my building to continue the discussion following a workshop, and I struggle with continuing the conversation with staff members when they are not present with me to learn.
- We all come to the workshops and leave with different take aways and our committee has a plan to deal with that issue. We have chosen to build in time to meet after workshops to share learning with others who could not attend.

Reflective question to consider:

- How can you use structures you have in place meant to help your students to help develop your staff?