

Welcome back, Nooksack Valley!

What a great start to the school year. We have heard numerous stories and examples about how excited our kids have been to get back to school, meet new teachers, see their old teachers, and meet new friends. The start of the year is such a big moment because of the 'newness' and the feeling of a fresh start, full of possibilities and hope.

As a system we are focused this year on developing a "Vision for equitable student experience." It is our goal to create a system that ensures each and every student experiences feelings of happiness and pride regularly. As we've seen all week, most of our students start the year in this mode. We believe Nooksack Valley is an amazing place for our students and we have perception data that shows this:

- I feel good about my cultural/ethnic background: 83% positive responses.
- My teachers expect all students to succeed no matter who they are: 83% positive responses.

As our teachers and staff grapple with what this 'vision' can look like over the course of the year, we also know that peer to peer relationships play a big role student experience. We have data that suggests we have work to do:

- I feel proud of my school: 52% positive responses.
- I enjoy coming to school: 40% positive responses.
- Most students are respectful of others in the school: 29% positive responses.

Students have shared their experiences with harassment, intimidation, and bullying. We've heard examples of racially insensitive and homophobic comments as well. We feel that the data above reflects many things but is most certainly related to these experiences. It is impossible for students to feel happy and proud if they face these negative comments on a regular basis, and I believe we all agree they have no place in our community.

This is where you come in. Our community is so supportive of each other, as witnessed two years ago when a natural disaster devastated our community. We ALL pulled together to ensure those impacted received the support they needed to recover. What if we treated the above behaviors like a disaster and had a community-wide response to support those impacted, make sure they feel a sense of status and belonging, while at the same time "cleaning out" the negative behaviors once and for all.

This is our vision of an equitable student experience for each and every student. That they are excited to attend school everyday because they know they will be treated with dignity and respect. They know they will be accepted for who they are and who they want to be. That they will be challenged by their teachers to learn and grow socially and academically and supported by their peers.

We encourage you to talk to your children about their experiences. Let us know what is going well and what we can improve upon. Nooksack Valley is an amazing place to raise our children, we have staff that are committed to ensuring a positive student experience. Together we can ensure this rings true for all of our students.

Here's to a great year, full of happiness and pride for us all!

In gratitude,

Matt Galley