

Linkage Meeting with 27J Principals

July 29, 2014

Michael Landwehr: What is the best thing about your school?

Rich Patterson (Stuart MS):

- Ability to come in early last year
- Peeled layers
- Proactive in changes
- Incredible staff with the hunger to learn
- The people at Stuart

David Felten (Henderson ES):

- The kids at the school and the community
- The ability to guide and direct kids
- Kids have amazing cultures
- The sense of community between teachers and parents
- Multiple cities
- School is like family. They have had growing pains, but has only made them stronger

Laura Gold (Southeast ES – Filling in for Sarah James):

- Community and working together
- Families take learning very seriously
- The social events
- The wonderful staff and volunteers

Evoice Sims (Second Creek ES):

- Getting to be there!
- The staff and families
- Coming together and the connections made
- Pushing students to do their best

Tom Delgado (Prairie View MS):

- It's my second home
- The staff, parents and students!
- Great environment
- Celebrating success

Brett Minne (Turnberry ES):

- The relationships made between the staff and students
- The sense of community
- Positive relationships within the community
- Struggling with some imperfections, but gaining strength through these
- Nurturing relationships

Ben Ploeger (Eagle Ridge Academy – Charter):

- The graduates have options
- College night/week

Michele Saller (Brantner ES):

- Loves the community
- All of the staff trust enough to come in and have a “chat” when needed
- Staff share what they know/learn about themselves
- Staff have a wonderful mindset
- The school is all positive
- The environment, which allows staff and students to share experiences they have

Candice Reese (Thimmig ES):

- The people!
- Round Robin Meetings
- The feel of being at home
- Being able to stay and chat with staff
- Staff having the desire to get to know one another
- Building strong relationships
- The regular attendance at interviews

Ana Mendoza (Prairie View HS):

- The kids (Naughty or Nice)!! – Misses them over the summer
- Kids coming back from summer break

Val Ortega (Pennock ES):

- The people
- The ability to problem solve and “figure it all out”

Janet Wyatt (AYSC):

- The staff! They are truly there for the kids.

Kay Collins (South ES):

- The 500+ kids
- The staff
- The love the kids and staff have for school

Jennifer Alexander (BOLT):

- The small and personal social growth of students
- Students not being connected to another school

Andra Ramsay (North ES):

- The passion that both the staff and the parents have for the children
- The importance of the kids
- The desire to be a great school
- The love for the students and their parents
- The parents bringing their kids to the interviews
- (Elena Mendoza AP) – The desire for more community members

Michael Clow (Northeast ES):

- Being professional and serious in times of business
- Staff takes education serious
- Staff and students taking ownership
- The diversity. 50% of our students are Hispanic. Although, sometimes it is tough being such a diverse school!

Cyndra Foster (BHA):

- Parents and teachers act as a team

Trina Norris-Buck (Vikan MS):

- The People (Staff, Families, and Volunteers)
- People come from everywhere to work in School District 27j
- The staff's eagerness to learn and grow
- Getting taken out of "my" comfort zone
- Very proud of the accomplishments made

John Biner (Brighton HS):

- The traditions, the families, the environment
- The respect
- The focus on improvement
- Rigor
- Everyone having a common goal, all of us wanting to get to the same place
- Best DECA in the state!
- Staff and Student fitness
- The new choir teacher

Eric Lambright (Overland Trail MS):

- Teacher's and kid's longevity
- Rising to expectations

Carrie Brock (Westridge ES):

- The kids, teachers and parents
- Having a community voice

Patrick Day: We are always hearing new educational phrases. Help us to understand rigor and how do you provide it?

Jennifer Alexander (BOLT):

- Increase the essential skills.

Michael Clow (Northeast ES):

- “It is difficult to exhaustive. Pushing through the thinking classroom. Having structure in the classroom, and being strong thinkers.”

Cydra Foster (BHA):

- “Rigor is a challenge. Rigor is actually a high goal.”

Andra Ramsay (North ES):

- What has to happen to students is more planning. Students need to worker harder than the teachers. Focus on planning and skills preparation. Challenge them and focus on graduation no matter what they do.

Elena Mendoza (AP of North ES):

- Rush Forward – How do they get trained for jobs that aren’t even created yet?

Ana Mendoza (Prairie View MS):

- Getting kids to think and then getting them to transfer that knowledge.

Val Ortega (Pennock ES):

- Rigor is deeper and more intense even in kindergarten. We provide it by continued sustained professional development.

Janet Wyatt (AYSC):

- Trying to make the connections professional.

John Biner (Brighton HS):

- Rigor needs to be done more. We stay away from following; the process is giving them knowledge and let them work on it.

Carrie Brock (Westridge ES):

- Push rigor to a literal place. We must teach the teachers rigor and make the most out of our teachers!

Eric Lambricht (Overland Trail MS):

- Push rigor into UIP. Push all kids at or above their own grade level. Keep all kids engaged at all times. Do not let kids go unattended.

Laura Gold (Southeast ES – Filling in for Sarah James):

- Provide a deep understanding that can be transferred onto other things.

Rich Patterson (Stuart MS):

- Expectation to learn at a high level. Stay on rigor- thinking is transference; think transferring, focus on transference. Make sure the whole staff is on board.

David Felten (Henderson ES):

- Simplistic to look at, but hard to obtain. True engagement of students at a high level. Keep kids engaged.

Brett Minne (Turnberry ES):

- Look at where kids are at and where they need to be. Moving your way up.

Evoice Sims (Second Creek ES):

- Building and challenging kids to go deeper. Provide intense and intentional instruction. “Are they learning this? What is it?”

Tom Delgado (Prairie View MS):

- There needs to be a start and end. Work with staff to provide the tools they need. Looking at each individual student to determine what they need. Using school leadership and building capacity of leaders. Using peers to help communicate and making sure they are pushing the students.

Candice Reese (Thimmig ES):

- Instructional sense of urgency with feedback that can be provided.

Michele Saller (Brantner ES):

- Using standards inside of the building- from the oldest standards to the most systematic.

Ben Ploeger (Eagle Ridge Academy- Charter):

- Trying to get people to make an uncompromising standard. Make sure there is support for the staff.

Trina Norris-Buck (Vikan MS):

- Pushing edges of competency, shared determination of rigor, many things with the feel that “looks nice”.

Kay Collins (South ES):

- Rigor is expectations, instructional planning, and meeting student’s needs.

Roberta Thimmig: How do you (principals) use the 27J evaluation system to improve instruction? How do you help your staff improve?

Most principals use the goals of each school's UIP (unified improvement plan) as a focal "goal" for each teacher. Basically every teacher's personal growth goal will enhance the improvement of instruction and the student's growth and learning. Then there may be more specific growth goals (classroom management, instruction style, etc.), that are agreed to by those involved.

The system creates a VERY DYNAMIC interaction between the principal and teacher, but also can create constructive interaction with other teachers and staff in providing better instruction practices in the classroom. Communication (in person, via blog, via email) is in the forefront.

This dynamic interaction ranges from very structured and clarified steps to generalized outcomes depending on the skill set of the teacher. This interaction also identifies teachers who are struggling, ineffective, or non-responsive much quicker than with the previous system. This is when the "intensive track" is put into place and there are specific protocols for this intervention.

With principals being in the classroom more often (if not weekly), allows the principals to be teaching coaches and to see progress or the lack of progress. It also would give them a better sense of the "pulse" of the school and the learning occurring within the walls.

Most principals commented that with the evaluation system, the teachers internalize or own their growth goals. The goals are not given to the teacher; they are decided by the individual with the principal's guidance. It is sort of the thinking classroom for the teacher with the principal as the instructor.

The principals have grown with the system because they need to be the teachers of teachers.

Many of the principals said that the system has allowed their teachers to take risks in their teaching. With the principals being in the classroom more, the risks can be evaluated quickly as to their effectiveness. Plus if the principal has conducted a personal development "lesson", they can see if those ideas have been implemented or can be used to evaluate the effectiveness of the personal development activity.

As a side result, the system has created more trust between the principal and their staff. Anytime you get more interaction between people, the likelihood of a better outcome is enhanced.

All were much happier with the system. Most of the bugs have been worked out over the last three years. Plus it seems like the system will not be "replaced" in the near future with another idea. It evaluates the teacher, gets the principal interacting personally with each teacher, and will make our instruction to students BETTER.

Rick Doucet: We all have tools in our work. What tool do you find most useful in your role as the principal? What tool do you need?

The Principals gave many tools they found most useful as their role as principals of the schools of District 27J. This list includes:

- Feedback and Communication
- Secretary and Support Staff
- The Breakthrough Coach (Malachi Pancoast)
- Staff
- Communication and Connectivity
- Relationships
- Instruction and Coaching
- Building within the Community
- Teachers
- High Expectations
- Mutual Accountability
- Belief in the Future
- Perseverance
- Structures- Goals- Leadership
- Support from peers
- Community
- Group Hugs
- Emotional Intelligence
- Committed people
- Mutual goals and values
- Transparency

The Principals gave examples of many tools they found they may need to better fulfill their role as Principal. This list is:

- Time and Money
- Managerial Staff or a Robot!
- Time to attend trainings
- Time for students to get engaged in learning
- Money to get the students what they need
- Resources
- New Building
- Money for new teachers
- A new math teacher
- Technology
- Flexible volunteers and mentors
- An understanding of “our” mission and goals
- Structures – Thinking Classrooms
- Patience
- Work/Life balance
- Coaching more effectively
- Suitcase for ideas and resources
- A Life Coach
- A Magic Wand!

Greg Piotraschke: Everyone has a story, a complaint, an opinion, etc. How do you listen to those comments and what do you do with them?

Tom Delgado (Prairie View MS):

- "Listen to find out and then direct it to where it needs to go. Provide service and be available. Secretaries handle the calls."
- Registration, feedback, and modifying the process.

Evoice Sims (Second Creek ES):

- Listen and be direct. Realize that they family or student may have a different perspective. If it is in "our" realm we will do our best to fix it. Let parents know "we" are as concerned for their child as they are.
- We like big parent involvement and it increased when we added security and a new flow to the environment.
- During the registration of new students, ask them what "we" can do to help them be successful.

Brett Minne (Turnberry ES):

- "Listening and trying to find out the story behind the story."
- Parking Lot= Safety
- Being flexible to the situation, everyone is unique.
- After Sandy Hook we learned that the community wanted a quick and visible response. When there is immediate action/response it is far less complicated.

Trina Norris-Buck (Vikan MS):

- Listen for both what is there and what's not. There will be a hidden/inner meaning.
- "If it is out of my control, should I dwell on it?"
- "I will listen to you, but that doesn't mean I can do what you want."
- Values

Michele Saller (Brantner ES):

- Ask them what their solution is.
- "What is it that you want?"

Candice Reese (Thimmig ES):

- Meet with the people we can.
- Ask, "What has been working? What do you want to do next?"
- Help come to a solution.

Kevin West (Director of Student Intervention):

- Try to never forget the parent's point of view. Sometimes they may be afraid to take "yes" as an answer.
- During IEP meetings remember to try to make your perspective from the parent's point of view – including Native Spanish Parents.

Val Ortega (Pennock ES):

- We listen. Listen for information, urgency, purpose, and meaning; there's a reason!

Janet Wyatt (AYSC):

- Evaluate. Find out where the complaint is coming from – what is the reason? Then respond.

Kay Collins (South ES):

- Remember the one telling the story or making the complaint just wants to be heard.
- Ask them “where do we want to go next?”
- Value their thoughts.

Ana Mendoza (Prairie View HS):

- Sometimes the intervention has to be checked. “It is usually not about you!” Then the problem may be easier to deal with.
- Being able to move to a conclusion

Cyndra Foster (Brighton Heritage Academy):

- Listen and try to come to an understanding of the history.
- Try to meet their needs and understand.

Michael Clow (Northeast ES):

- Having an open door. Being able to have the “just come in” element.
- If “I” am there I will try to help, but it may go back to talking with the teacher.
- You never know who is going to know what.

Andra Ramsay (North ES):

- “Being a new Principal I will have to do lots of listening.”
- Being involved with the families and parents.
- Ask the parents “what is it that you need?”

Jennifer Alexander (BOLT):

- Allow for space
- Remember some people don’t always have a positive view about High School students
- Ask “How do you know about their problems if you don’t know about them?”
- It is hard to deal with parents who have issues with other schools.

Elena Mendoza (AP North ES):

- Words can’t fix everything – take a bite of the problem.
- Where are the parents coming from?

John Biner (Brighton HS):

- Try to look at the parent’s perspective and try to ignore any impoliteness.
- All parties need to be there to talk.
- All parties involved should come to an agreement and remain open and honest.
- If you aren’t hearing complaints than there is probably a bigger problem.

Eric Lambright (Overland Trail MS):

- Continue to listen to the families
- Show Evidence
- Talk and stay calm

Carrie Brock (Westridge ES):

- Build a good culture on how we process complaints.

David Felten (Henderson ES):

- You have to overcome your own perspective on the issue.
- Make sure the parents truly know you are listening. This helps to diffuse the situation and helps to get to the bottom of the problem.
- Allows parents to understand how admin will help them with their problems and complaints.

Laura Gold (Southeast ES – Filling in for Sarah James):

- Everyone is different. Value them by listening to them and help them understand clear and timely communication.
- Say thank you to them, and hopes that at the end of the day they'll say it back.

Rich Patterson (Stuart MS):

- A lot of good self-reflection makes a true good listener.
- Ask yourself, "Does your ego get in the way? Are you assuming?"
- Start with positive intentions.
- Define what the problem or complaint is really about.

Donna Petrocco: What are the challenges and successes you hear in the perspectives of the community?

The list that the Principals composed as their greatest challenges are as followed:

- Getting Children into the schools they want to be in
- Being in an older building
- Trust in the transition process
- Public perception- gaining public trust
- Asking ourselves "Are we competitive with other districts?"
- Questioning where the public gets their information
- The perception the public has when they are not informed correctly
- School ratings
- The perception on how we spend money
- Some of the staff doesn't trust in the administration and the way they spend money
- Concerns from staff
- The question "Why does School District 27J have schools in Commerce City and Thornton?"
- People who don't understand why we need more schools
- Hometown residents who do not support the schools and are narrow minded
- Older residents are supportive or interested in the schools
- Younger parents cannot afford an increase in their taxes
- The community in general doesn't understand what "we" do with our money
- The old perspective of 27J – and the need for new philosophy and progression
- Big High Schools with big class sizes
- Wondering if we are current in our technology – it being the I-Pad era and all
- The aging of facilities
- Core Brighton is getting poorer while the "ring" has newer schools and better housing

- Brighton still being perceived as a small town
- Not meeting needs like bigger districts
- Bullying issues in Middle Schools
- Social Media with students and parents
- "Assignment" of a middle school from an outlying Elementary School like Westridge or Brantner
- Parent's overall concerns
- Crowding in schools
- Full access to schools
- BHA as an offsite classroom for BHS
- The idea of year round School District 27j
- The loss of AVID classes
- Fee for certain services
- Bond and mill levy
- Parents who are worried about the financial commitment
- Parents who feel they are not financially responsible for their student's fees
- Shutting down open enrollment
- Cuts in programming
- GT program cuts
- Older community and members are not supportive of the new bond and mill levy
- Community members who do not understand the benefits of a highly educated workforce
- Too much emphasis on TCAP scores
- Lack of parent engagement
- City of Brighton gap
- The rumor that teachers are highly paid or over paid

The list that the Principals composed as their greatest successes are as followed:

- Teacher/Student relationships
- Good work from leaders within the district
- Parent/Teacher conferences – there is positive interaction between parent and teacher
- Trust from parents towards teachers
- People who love their schools
- Good teachers
- Safe schools
- Still being able to offer sports, art, P.E – even through budget cuts
- Dress code
- Grade ratio
- Out of district families want their children to attend our schools
- The many new applicants who want to work within the district
- The longevity of admin and staff
- "Reaching" the learner. Kids are actually learning!
- School programs
- ELL programs and student growth
- Parents are excited about "thinking classroom"
- Welcoming environment
- Performance within Adams County with other schools
- Pride in school performance
- People want to go to our schools and have moved to the district to do so
- Kids follow their teachers if moving to another school