School Culture and Leveraging Legacy

- Beginning in April and May I convened meetings with all staff members, groups of students from each grade level, organized parent groups (boosters etc.) and a few other groups of parents as opportunities arose (games, meetings, other)
- The purpose of these meetings was to establish the “temperature” of the school, evaluate existing school culture and solicit feedback about perceived strengths and weaknesses in the High School environment

Feedback

- Among the feedback collected from stakeholders, common themes included:
  - School and students lack “school spirit” and pride
  - Students are unmotivated and apathetic
  - Minimal parental involvement
  - Poor communication (admin to staff, staff to students, school to home). Lots of “overcommunication” which has become ineffective

Disengaged/Disenfranchised Community Members

- A common theme found largely in the schools late Boomer/early Gen X community is a disinterest and disengagement with the Central High School community
- Regularly cited was a feeling that their history had been discarded and forgotten and somehow did not matter
- While they support their children and grandchildren in their education and want them to be successful, they do not feel “invested” further in the success of the school.

Planning and planting seeds

- Several discussion and planning groups have been convened over recent months ranging from informal staff and student groups to more formal SIT discussions and meetings with groups of parents
- Priorities for change and a shift in school culture centered around:
  - Building school identity, brand, and school spirit
  - Increasing student agency and ownership
  - More intense and intentional social media outreach in addition to more traditional community outreach
  - An intentional focus on character (sometimes looking beyond the “small stuff”)

Planning and planting seeds

- Priorities for change and a shift in school culture centered around:
  - Planning and delivering more engaging, student-centered instruction
  - A deeper focus on our shared history, embracing our legacy schools and classes and celebrating our alumni
  - Modifying parent engagement opportunities to increase access (timing of events, languages used, methods of communication)
  - Creating more opportunities for the community at large to engage with the school and campus

Results so far

- Attendance and engagement at games and events has increased
- Engagement with Social Media channels has increased
- Visible signs of increased school spirit both in the school and in the community
- Student behavior and school “culture” has significantly improved
- Students engaging in interpersonal dialogues regularly (noticeable decrease in phone use)
- “Legacy” campaign (launched at Homecoming) and alumni nights have been a tremendous success

