

Empowered by Community

By Dr. Anabella SilverMoon

At Dock Mennonite Academy, the sense of community among faculty is more than just a pleasant byproduct of working together—it is at the heart of who we are. As an institution committed to fostering academic excellence through faith and service, we believe that strong, trust-filled relationships among colleagues and leaders are key for a thriving environment for teachers and students. These bonds of friendship and mutual support lead to a rich, vibrant educational experiences, where everyone feels valued and empowered to contribute their best.

Research supports what we experience at Dock. The Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) reports that 85% of U.S. employees with close work friendships believe that they positively impact their careers, 86% are more likely to feel satisfied with their jobs.¹ Workplace friendships enhance satisfaction while driving innovation and creativity, fostering a collaborative spirit where new ideas flourish.² “Building a culture of trust makes a meaningful difference.”³ Our leaders’ trust in us, in our use of time/resources, supports research in neurobiology: leadership’s trust stimulates oxytocin production in the members of a community, increasing a sense of safety, wellbeing, and cooperation.⁴

Teachers and staff with close friends at work are more loyal and invested because they feel seen, respected, and valued. According to research, 44% of people with a best friend at work would recommend their workplace to others. However, despite these benefits, Gallup found that only 2 in 10 people have a best friend at work.⁵ At Dock, we are deeply blessed that so many of our faculty members enjoy close relationships with one another, which strengthens their individual work but also the broader mission of the school. The Bible underscores the importance of working in unity and harmony: "Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labor." (Ecclesiastes 4:9) This scripture speaks to the power of collaboration and the joy of shared work. At Dock, our faculty model this principle daily. We work together with mutual respect, enriching each other’s efforts and enhancing the educational experience of students.

¹ Kylie Ora Lobell. (2023, March 16). *How employers can encourage workplace friendships*. SHRM. Retrieved October 15, 2024, from <https://www.shrm.org/topics-tools/news/employee-relations/how-employers-can-encourage-workplace-friendships>

² O. Durrah. *Do we need friendship in the workplace? The effect on innovative behavior and mediating role of psychological safety*. (2022, November 9). SpringerLink. Current Psychology. Retrieved October 15, 2024, from <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s12144-022-03949-4>

³ Zak, P. J. (2017, season-04). *The Neuroscience of Trust*. Harvard Business Review. <https://hbr.org/2017/01/the-neuroscience-of-trust>

⁴ Zak, P. J., & Barraza, J. A. (2013, November 19). *The neurobiology of collective action*. National Library of Medicine. Retrieved October 15, 2024, from <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3832785/>

⁵ Patel, A., & Plowman, S. (2022, August)(Updated 2024, January). *The increasing importance of a best friend at work*. Gallup. Retrieved October 15, 2024, from <https://www.gallup.com/workplace/397058/increasing-importance-best-friend-work.aspx>

"How good and pleasant it is when God's people live together in unity!" (Psalm 133:1) This is the essence of Dock, where friendship and collaboration create a unified, faith-centered environment that reflects Christ's love. In this unity we find strength, purpose, and fulfillment. Through these relationships we best serve our students.

At Dock, we celebrate the beauty of working in a community where friendships flourish and trust between faculty and leadership builds a foundation of shared success. Together, we create a culture of encouragement, faith, and collaboration that helps each individual, and our community as a whole, to thrive.