

The Spartan Sentinel

...inspiring and equipping our students...

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Team,

Good morning! Hopefully it's been a great week for you. Well, we have completed 9 weeks of school! It is hard to believe. *I just want to say thanks for all you do every day!* I shared on Tuesday how awesome it is for me to go around to different classrooms and see all the great things going on. *This really is a special school because of you!*

This week, Abby Sloan and Mandy Duncan joined me at PLC Steering Committee. It was a great day of learning from our colleagues around the district. One thought that really stuck with me from that meeting was the idea of *focus*. As we continue to have this discussion about effective teams, I realized that *effective teams are characterized by focus*. Dr. Hintz shared that one of his mentors used to tell him that "everything is nothing." When a person, teacher, team, etc., tries to do everything, they end up doing nothing. *Effective teams have focus.*

I think the thing to realize about effective teams is that they don't just happen. They're created intentionally. Now, every now and then, you have a group of people that come together by chance and bring the elements of an effective team and it kind of naturally happens, but more often than not, *effective teams are created intentionally.*

The same concept is true with this idea of focus. A team can't just say, "We're going to be focused," *there has to be some intentionality when it comes to focus*. The reality is life in school can get kind of crazy! We all have times where we feel like we're barely keeping our heads above water. In those instances, without intentional focus, we'll just do what we need to in order to survive. ***However, as a school, I don't want us to just survive; I want us to THRIVE!***

So, how do we build in this intentional focus? How do we ensure we are focusing so that we will thrive instead of just survive? Well, that's a challenging question. At PLC Steering on Wednesday we took some time to discuss that question. I've got to be honest, I was kind of stumped. I'm a verbal processor and almost never feel like I don't know what to say when a question is asked of me (just ask my wife...it's pretty annoying). However, when we were asked

to think about how we keep focus, I initially had a hard time. Thankfully, I was at a table with some experts who were able to help me figure it out.

Effective teams (and individuals) build structures into their daily lives that ensure focus. Again, remember, when we're just trying to stay afloat, we need those structures in our lives in order to stay focused.

So what does that look like for a school? Well, it means we have a clear mission or purpose that is why we do what we do. ***Our mission is to inspire and equip all students to continuously acquire and apply knowledge and skills while pursuing their dreams and enriching the lives of others.*** If we're having a hard time staying focused, we need to come back to that purpose. Does what we're (or I'm) working on support this mission? If not, it's something that can be dropped because it takes away from focus.

I believe effective schools also stay structured by being explicit in their process and procedures. Being unclear is the opposite of focus. So being clear about things like schedules, intervention, and expectations is critical.

But what about you? How do we stay focused individually? Through our discussion on Wednesday I realized *each person stays focused in different ways*. The key is that you find out what works for you and do it! For me, I keep a notebook. I always joke that even though I write almost everything down, I still feel like I only remember 80% of what I do! That's a joke but the point is, without it, I'd be really ineffective as a principal. Also, I have worked to build a couple of key routines into my day to keep me focused on the mission; on why I do what I do. This year, a couple of my routines are to start my day by writing a couple of notes to staff members, to greet as many students as I can individually, and I'm trying to end my day with a positive phone call home. Now, I'm not perfect with this, but those routines remind me of our mission here at WCS. I want to enrich your lives and the lives of our students.

So has you take time to relax this weekend (PLEASE MAKE SURE YOU DO), take some time to reflect on what you do to keep focused on what's important. Maybe you'll find you haven't' really considered staying focused and you need to build some structures into your life. Maybe you'll find that you're staying pretty focused. In either case, start with the mission and build your focus from there. Have a great weekend!

Dave