

The Spartan Sentinel

...inspiring and equipping our students...

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Team,

Good morning! Did you see that beautiful Harvest Moon last night? It was amazing. Hopefully today is the great end to a good week. I will tell you, I could certainly feel the Full Moon this week!

About a year ago, I saw a special on TV about modern aircraft carriers. Basically, this documentary showed what life was like on an aircraft carrier. I have to tell you, I was blown away. Aircraft carriers are HUGE! The largest are part of the US Navy's Nimitz Class. Those carriers are 4.5 acres in size, over 18 stories tall, and are about 1,100 feet long! Did you know that the carriers have a company of over 5,000 people! Basically, an aircraft carrier is like a floating town! On board modern carriers there are dentist offices, barber shops, doctors' offices, and various stores. It really was amazing to see how it all worked.

When we think about the idea of a team, a group of people working together for a common purpose, the crew and company of an aircraft carrier can teach us a lot. In fact, the big question is how does one get over 5,000 people to accomplish a single goal?

Well first, there has to be a purpose, a mission, which guides everything that's done. On the Navy's website it states that,

"The mission of the Navy is to maintain, train and equip combat-ready Naval forces capable of winning wars, deterring aggression and maintaining freedom of the seas."

So when you think about those over 5,000 people working and living on an aircraft carrier for months at a time, you have to understand that many of them have non-combatant roles. They are cooks, barbers, cashiers, receptionists, etc. What keeps them all aligned? That mission! They do their job to help maintain, train, and equip combat-ready forces. It starts with a clear purpose.

So a coordinating and motivating over 5,000 people toward a common goal requires a clear purpose, or mission that drives everything they do. Another factor in moving that many people toward a common goal is clear roles and expectations amongst the people on board. In the Navy, it's pretty clear. There is a clear ranking system with a well-defined chain of command.

Finally, in order to move an organization toward a common goal, all parts of the organization must have specific goals that align to the larger goal. So, the flight deck crew of the carrier needs to focus on their goals, such as safely landing a fighter jet, and they must ensure that their goal supports the larger mission. If they try to take care of someone else's goal, like cooking dinner for 5,000 people, they won't get their job done, and the larger mission won't be accomplished. Each group within the larger group must be clear about what their purpose is, and how their purpose is directly supporting the larger mission.

So, how does this relate to us? Well, we're not an aircraft carrier crew of 5,000 people, but we are a relatively large elementary school. And just like the crew of a carrier has many groups with different roles and purposes, we too have many collaborative teams with different roles and purposes. The truth is there are a lot of moving parts at Jefferson Elementary School and it can be a challenge to make sure they're all working together! The bottom line is, if we are going to be successful in accomplishing our mission *to inspire and equip all students to continuously acquire and apply knowledge and skills while pursuing their dreams and enriching the lives of others*, we need to operate much like the crew of an aircraft carrier. We have the larger mission, we need to be clear about roles and responsibilities, and most importantly, *all of our different groups/collaborative teams must be clear about what their goals are and ensure that those goals support the larger goal.*

So, last night our PLC Leadership Team met to review the data from last year. We reviewed the input offered at the staff meeting Monday and we set goals for the year. *The purpose of setting these goals was to give us clear direction for this year; to give us a common purpose, a specific target that we will reach in order to move our mission forward.* We reviewed the data all the way back to 2010, we discussed trends and highlights, as well as areas that could be brighter. We discussed the factors that affect the data, but we ultimately determined that this is *our* data. We don't hide from it. We wear it. It's ours. There are times when we may not like it, and there are times when we love it, but regardless, it's ours. *We know that we are the number one factor affecting that data.*

When we got done reviewing the data, we asked, "What are we going to do about it?" We worked to set 1 goal for ELA and 1 goal for Math based on all we discussed. We made sure the goal was Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Results-oriented, and Time-bound. So, here are our goals for the 2013-2014 school year:

- **By the end of the 13-14 school year, 85% of students in grades 3-6 will pass the ELA portion of the ISTEP test.**
- **By the end of the 13-14 school year, 88% of students in grades 3-6 will pass the Math portion of the ISTEP test.**

Starting next week, each collaborative team will have a 1/2 day of release time to among other things, set interdependent, measurable goals for themselves for the year. The question that you as a team need to consider is, *"What do we need to do as a team to accomplish our school-wide goals?"* The

answer to this question will drive your goal setting, and remember, the answer will look different depending on your team's role. Just like the cook of the aircraft carrier has a much different individual goal than the captain, they both move the larger mission forward when they do their job well.

So, how does my 1st grade team help make sure we accomplish this goal? How does my PE PLC help accomplish this goal? How does our 6th grade team accomplish this goal? Those are the questions we want to answer over the next two weeks. From those answers will come your interdependent, measurable team goals. Some of you aren't on a grade level collaborative team. That's okay, I'm not either! But we all can have goals for ourselves to accomplish our school-wide goals. Everyone is important in this from our instructional assistants to our specials teachers, our cafeteria staff, our office staff, and of course our teaching staff. We all need to do our jobs well to make our goals, and part of doing our jobs well is setting goals.

Why do we set these goals again? Remember, a team isn't a team unless they have a common purpose. If your grade level team doesn't have a specific goal that you're working toward daily, you're just a group of teachers. However, when you've got a clear set of goals that you're specifically working toward you become the most powerful force in education; you become a team! Goals are the glue that hold a team together when things are tough and they're the fuel that drives the hard work you put in every day, so take the goal setting seriously.

We really do have a great team here at Jefferson and it's not just because we do work toward a common goal, but it's also because we have incredible teachers who are great people. I am proud to be a part of this team. Again, it's my hope to spend much of your 1/2 day with you to help you as you set these goals. If you have questions or are unsure about anything, I want to be there to help you. I look forward to the great things we're going to accomplish this year!

Dave