



Evan D. Winkler

Ring Lardner Middle School

Niles, Michigan

evan.winkler@nilesschools.org

Best Practices

1) Teacher efficacy and positive relationships are a staple for the success of both students and staff. Offering encouraging and positive reinforcement in a timely manner increases belief in oneself and one's abilities by instilling a sense of confidence, self-worth, and motivation. This is vital for anyone who may lack positive interactions in their lives outside of school. Without any encouraging words, a learner, or even a staff member, is likely to shut down and change their views of the educational experience. This is not to say expectations should be lowered simply to ensure students or staff will be successful. A school culture should hold high standards for students and staff while challenging them to achieve difficult goals. Along the way words of encouragement and offerings of support and collaboration strengthens the belief in everyone's capabilities and abilities within the school. When goals are met, we must take time to celebrate with each other. If struggles occur, we must meet them with intentional focus on progress that is being made to increase resilience and perseverance.

2) Cultivating leadership in teachers is an important part of having a successful school culture centered around learning. As administrators we can't do it all by ourselves. If we want to have a high functioning school with successful learners we need our teachers to take on leadership roles. We need to empower our teachers to be their best. When we work together collectively, schools will increase the likelihood of accomplishing their goals. We, as administrators, need to focus on three things.

The first thing is to promote risk-taking. Every day students enter schools where adults hypocritically demand that they (the student) take risks; while they sit back and do the same lesson, the same manner that they have done for the past 5 years. As adults we need to model risk-taking in our instruction and in our professional interactions. In order for this to happen, we, as leaders, need to create an environment where risk-taking is the norm. One of the biggest things is creating an environment where risk taking is

okay. As adults we need to remember that it is okay to fail because some of the best ideas, lessons, and strategies come from our failures. Leaders need to acknowledge those who take risks and let them know you are proud of them for trying something new and encourage them to keep trying.

The second thing is collaboration. We need to have a partnership with our staff. The environment needs to be a place where teachers are collaborating with each other and with their administrative team. Listening to your teachers and by asking them questions for their input builds trust and increases their sense of value and worth within the school.

The third thing is encourage your leaders. We all can recognize and name leaders in our school. We need to encourage them to step into leadership roles and to share what they are doing with others. Giving positive feedback and a positive nudge is all that is needed. Once they feel they can do it, support them and bounce ideas off of them and give them tasks that they can handle. Before you know it they are volunteering for a task or just doing things to make the school better.

As a leader we need to model these behaviors. We have some great resources in our building and we are doing a disservice to ourselves, our peers, and most importantly our students, if we don't work together to create an innovative atmosphere for our learners.