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Best Practices

1) “Nobody cares how much you know until they know how much you care.” This quote by Theodore Roosevelt is one of my favorite quotes of all time, and one I have tried to base my life and my leadership around. Building positive relationships is the foundation to success in every area. It is necessary to reach out and genuinely get to know the staff, students and parents in our schools. It is important to remember our community members and leaders who will in turn pour into the lives of our staff and students. Building strong, positive relationships is a vital step to making a difference in the lives of our students, and it is paramount in shaping their futures. For an administrator, it can become very easy to get bogged down in the day-to-day life of mounting paperwork that would justify hiding in the office and scarcely being seen. To combat that, I use a mobile desk that allows me to easily continue to work on the important aspects of my job from a more visible location. It allows me to speak to students and staff as they pass by, greet parents as they enter the school, and build relationships through small, daily interaction. Being more visible means I see their faces daily and that they can see me. It gives me the opportunity to share a smile or for them to stop and hug me as they pass. I can stop them to compliment something I’ve noticed or address a student who may appear sad or down. They can also use that time to tell me how well they did on a test, an assignment or in their behavior so we can celebrate. It changes how they view my role in their life.

Another way I love to build relationships is by celebrating successes. Allowing teachers to give awards to students and other staff brings recognition and praise to even the smallest things. I enjoy making positive phone calls home to parents to let them know the amazing things their child is doing in school. It is wonderful to hear the pride and joy in their voices as they hear the positive influence their child is having on our school. I love seeing how excited the staff gets when they are recognized for small things they do

for each other. These small acts of positive recognition build relationships that make the staff and students feel appreciated and give them a place as a vital part of our team. The culmination of this has such a positive impact on the school culture and gives staff, students and parents a strong, positive foothold on their academic success.

2) Placing focus on the positives in our daily routine in school is a priority for me. I operate under the belief that people who feel valued and appreciated tend to do more than what is expected of them and are often more successful. Pointing out the positives can completely turn around the behavior of a student or allow a staff member to recover from a bad day or week. Many times, educators feel undervalued and underappreciated in their role. The same can be said for our students as well. Helping them to know they are a vital part of our team can completely change the outcome of their year, and I believe it is important to put an emphasis on that throughout the year.

To create an atmosphere and culture that focuses on positive and praise, I have worked with my Head Principal to implement different awards that give recognition to both our staff and our students. The first is our Rockin' Gator awards. These can be given by anyone in our school to anyone in our school. These awards can be given for small acts of kindness, extra hard work or achievement, being a great friend or helping a classmate or teacher. Once the award is written and an explanation is given, it is turned in to the office where it is read over the intercom on the morning announcements, prizes are awarded, a picture is taken and the picture is hung on the Rockin' Gator wall outside of the office. The administrative team calls the parents to notify them of their child's outstanding performance in school, and the pictures are often displayed on our social media pages with parental permission. This has really given everyone in the school something to strive to achieve.

The second award system that I have worked to implement is our Teacher and Teacher's Assistant of the Month award. We have so many amazing staff members that I felt it was important to recognize more than just one per year for their hard work and dedication to our school. As an administrative team, we developed a system that allows the staff to nominate one another for this award at the end of each month and tell why their nominee deserves it. We created preferred parking spaces at the front of the school for these staff members along with award coupons and gift cards from local businesses. The administrative team then goes to their classroom with an award and all of their prizes in hand and presents them their award in front of their class. We take pictures and announce the winners over the intercom and on our social media sites. We place signs outside their doors and make sure everyone knows their amazing contributions to our school. It is such a wonderful way to shift our focus to the positive impacts that our staff has on our school each day and say thank you for a job well done.