

January 24, 2007

To: Smitty

From: Monty Aldrich

THOUGHTS FROM THE UNIT OFFICE...

CAN NORTH CLAY CHANGE??

While I am here in my second year, I feel that I have spent a lot of time listening and talking to people. Many times I hear phrases such as "That's Louisville" or "That's Clay County". I also hear things like "There is no use in trying to talk to anyone. It will make it worse, or they won't listen". Others say, "It'll never change no matter what you do". If I was a believer in this, I wouldn't have pulled up stakes and come back to try to help better our school district. While I may be the leader of change, I am not solely responsible and cannot force anyone to change their own personality. I can change direction for the best interest of kids and our district.

I also spend a lot of my time being a listener while people chew a little fat off me. While I know that this is a big and vital part of my job, I become frustrated when people either want someone to get into trouble, be fired, or be crucified on demand. Sometimes it is difficult after being bombarded, but I try to treat everyone's complaint like it was the first and most important complaint of the day. I guess "That's Louisville" or "That's Clay County" means that nobody is accountable for this problem. It means that our geographical location is to blame? We have lost contact of all direct communication with each other for fear of conflict. I recently published some guidelines on a chain of command that we were all to follow. Instead of some attempting to follow in that direction, the chain of command was scrutinized and made fun of on the local "anonymous chat site". That's part of the problem. I am not offended when a person wants to speak his or her mind. I have a problem when there is not a name attached to that complaint. What's the point? Is it awareness or is it strength in numbers?

We are trying to build a team that will play a vital role in improving communication and community relations within the entire school setting and community. It will take time, and it will continue to be a tremendous task. Those who knew me as a kid growing up here, and those who knew me as a young teacher/coach have questioned others many times about whether I was capable of doing this job. I am sure that many still question this today. I hope that I am not the same kid or crazy coach that I once was. I am here to say that I do not attempt to do this job alone. In fact, teachers have much more of a direct impact on students than I do. "I" am not worried about glad handing people and being in the spotlight. "I" am not worried about the prestige and power of the position. I **am** worried about the interferences between what we really should be here for, and what gets in the way of our destination. I also have the responsibility to make sure that people do their jobs. While I know most of our staff from before, it's still my responsibility to make sure that they all carry out their responsibilities to excel for student benefit.

While I feel that little by little we have improved relationships and communications in how business is handled on a daily basis within our buildings, many roadblocks continue to knock us down and destroy progress occasionally. Morale can take a great deal of time to build, but it takes only a moment to destroy it. Many things need to be said about our school district. Our school district isn't perfect, and nobody working here should think or act in that manner. But, there are numerous great things about our school district that the general public never sees. Those "light bulb moments" such as when a child finally has success in learning something

difficult happens on a daily basis. There is a great deal of staff that cares for kids above and beyond the call of duty. You will never know, but some give money, clothes, and other items to any or all in need on an anonymous basis. No pat on the back...for the good of the kid. Others give love to those who don't receive a hug at home. Some even teach hygiene and show them how to survive on a daily basis. Some take the time to become interested in how a kid feels and what we can do to help. They don't want attention! They love kids!

There are also things that aren't done correctly or carried out in a proper manner within our schools. We know that, and we address that. Unless we know it, we cannot address it. Some assume we hear, know of, or see the problem. Sometimes we are the last to know. Most still question as to whether we ever address some things, but that is because we attempt to address others with privacy and dignity. Others do not have a right to know when an employee is called in and either reprimanded, corrected, or disciplined. You would want it the same way as an employee.

But, the NEGATIVISM that feeds into our organization from both internal and external means will never allow us to be the best. Instead, things that need to be said about you, me, and our entire school district and staff follow. Once said, we (me included) need to practice becoming more of a vital part of the district and community, and we need to all become accountable for positive change. First, the power trips that can destroy unity need to go. The behind-the back, underground way that some go about business to accomplish more power and control can disrupt what is best for kids. Sometimes, it can be "me vs. you" at stake instead of what's best for the kids. The "Me, Me, Me" society needs to leave our district. There will forever be negativism and jealousy here, but a majority can help combat that problem by making those people act alone.

In watching any sort of television show now, you will find that it's all about "ME". Reality TV is about watching "me" get more attention than anyone else. NFL football takes a longer time to watch now because when someone makes a tackle or catches a pass, there is a delay to watch the player run away from the crowd of players to do a dance. That allows "me, me, me" to be recognized for something that should have been done without celebration. Put a camera on people and see who it is all about. Some will do whatever to make themselves stand out so that it is about "me". Wow, how it all has changed. From comments that I hear during athletic events, it's not about "team" anymore. It's all about how much playing time "me" gets, or it's about fretting over someone else doing better than "me".

I am amazed that manners and etiquette have not been carried on through generations. I wasn't raised in the oval office but I am conscious of the attempt to try to treat others with manners. It amazes me on a daily basis. When I hold a door open for a stranger, most of the time that person doesn't say "thanks", and usually doesn't even acknowledge that I was there. Recently, I have pushed a baby stroller through many malls and hardly anyone will go out of their way to be mannerly. Most may walk in front of me, stop, not acknowledge, and maybe even carry on a conversation as if they were the only people in the entire building. I've seen people walk in line in front of others as if they weren't aware that others existed. I've seen people rudely interrupt others without acting as if it was wrong. At school, I have seen some conversations start in the same manner, and you can always bet the results are not going to be good. No "good morning", "thank you", "what can we do for you", or "could I have a minute of your time?" ends with poor results.

Do we want things to change for the better within our district or would we feel more comfortable on the negative bandwagon that is much easier to ride on? If we want change, then I think everyone has to put a stop to those negative bashings that take place. Everyone has to stop

crucifying people for things that really won't matter ten years later. Everyone has to become accountable for defending "the right thing" instead of making excuses and putting blame on someone else. Everyone has to accept that in order to make us the best, we have to offer help to make it better. Everyone has to be accountable for some problems and possible solutions instead of passing the buck to others each time. Everyone has to have a genuine concern for ALL kids instead of "one". After all, it might not be our most prestigious and successful kids that grow up and return home to settle. It might not be those who got the most playing time, or those who never got a "B" in school. Some of those won't want to return because of the attitude of the entire school community.

We don't have to change the world, but let's make it better here. Scrutinize what I say if you wish, but that only affects me. Do what's right to make it a better place to live and go to school for the others.