

August 29, 2008

To: Smitty

From: Monty Aldrich

THOUGHTS FROM THE UNIT OFFICE...

We're rolling again with a new school year and like always, there's plenty going on! It's pretty neat to watch kids on that first day of school. Kids are full of energy with new shoes and their hair combed and ready to go. Everyone's anxious to find their comfort zone with new classmates and new work environments. And, the old yellow school buses are rolling in once again.

The impact we have on kids' lives is incredible. They spend more time with us for the next nine months than with their families. At the beginning of the school season, I am asked constantly if I'm dreading those kids coming back to school. My answer is simply "No, without kids we wouldn't be in business!" What we prepare for all summer is to close out the old school year and arrange for the new. Our source for business is kids. I recently read a book that had a chapter entitled, "Stay Focused on the Focus". That's what we need to do. It is easy to whine when we don't have everything we want, and it's not a morale boost when we don't always get what's best for "us", but our focus should remain on kids. Anyone who feels different doesn't belong in this business. That's what we are striving for in this district. My goal is to achieve that. I may or may not ever get there, but anyone who is in this position should always strive for that goal. I challenge all to "Stay Focused on the Focus".

We're all human here (at least most of the time) and our system shouldn't rely on a reputation of "total control" or "always being right". I make mistakes every day and I have found that the best practice is to go to the employee, student or parent and tell them. Those who cannot simply state, "I goofed" are causing power struggles that create dissention. With that, our communication system remains most effective when we follow the established "Chain of Command". I laugh when people resent this system because it makes me wonder who they go to when they have issues to resolve outside the school system. I've yet to jump the chain and talk to George Bush about the gas prices. It just doesn't work. We have published our Chain of Command on our website at www.northclayschools.com. Simply put, please talk to the teacher, coach, or other person first in line who knows more about the issue than anyone else. That will probably get the best results.

Open House was very well attended and is an awesome display of how much parents care about their children. Athletics are also in full swing with some sort of activity available to attend practically every day. Our summer projects are completed with a few exceptions, and we are continuing to improve our curriculum where possible. I would like to say that we have also appreciated the Clay County Sheriff's Department and their

efforts to patrol our school zones daily. It has made everyone aware that school is in session regardless of who travels through Louisville.

As I visit with many teachers in our buildings, I am noticing a more concentrated effort on “global education”. Many teachers, including those who have been accustomed to teaching with old style methods, have focused on preparing our students to become more worldly knowledgeable through technology and learning. I feel this is vitally important as those who never experience life outside Clay County have a tough time adapting to a changing world. While I still feel that the “three R’s” and the basics are equally important, it is evident that the technological advances will drive our economy and the world economy in the future. Our kids are really smart in this area and need exposure to the outside world. Yet as adults, we are scared of this because we did not grow up with it and don’t know nearly as much as children do. To do this and still benefit from our small town environment, it is necessary that we do it through our educational system. I commend those making changes to benefit the students. It takes much more work and much more time and effort to adapt with new lessons and materials, but it follows “Staying Focused on the Focus”.

It’s another vitally important educational year for kids and I invite you to become involved not only in the issues of the school system but the positive experiences and impact that you can lend to our students. Please feel free to visit our buildings and classrooms whenever possible. We need more parents and community members observing the good things going on here and students value your support.