

November 9, 2009

To: Smitty

From: Monty Aldrich

THOUGHTS FROM THE UNIT OFFICE...

BALANCE, CRITICISM, SKEPTICISM...topics I usually spend a great deal of time conversing about with people on staff and in the community.

I spend a great deal of time in my office doing the things that I am supposed to do, doing the things that the state makes us do, and doing the things that will push us to be the best school district we can be. There is no way to feasibly describe my job. Sometimes during the school day, I spend time in each building whether it is to address issues, tend to other business, or just hang out and see some kids. It is usually then that people other than students see me. In that light, I do little but stand around in the hallway and shoot the breeze. But that is the best time of the day because I'd like students to at least know who I am, and I'd like to see what's going on in the buildings because that's what really matters. I also go to the post office, and sometimes go to Casey's to get a bottle of pop. When I'm in there, I either give the workers a hard time or I end up talking to someone I know while outside. That's when more people see me in a different light. BALANCE is important because I know what I have to do to get the job done the best I know how, but I also need to see and hear what's happening or what the issues are.

CRITICISM is what I get when I'm doing all of the above. When I'm in my office all of the time, I'm twiddling my thumbs. When I'm in the buildings, I'm just standing around in the hallway all day, and when I'm at Casey's, that's the only place anyone ever sees me.

SKEPTICISM is what I feel when I know I'm being CRITICIZED for the BALANCE throughout my day.

Does anyone ever feel that way? Probably most educators, municipal and government workers, and public officials or anyone you know that gets paid to deal with someone else's precious commodity feels that way at times.

Since it's nearly Thanksgiving, I'm thankful for:

-all of our teachers, counselors, and coordinators for taking time each and every day to prepare what they feel are the best lessons for our children. I would like to thank them for going the extra mile to make sure each student has opportunities to help build their chance for success as adults. I would like to thank the administration for doing the same. These people spend long hours away from their families that few see or appreciate to tackle issues and solve problems so that learning can occur.

-all of our secretaries who work on the front lines in every office. As most of you have experienced, they need about 10 hands and a few more ears to do everything at once when it is busy in the office. They often take the blunt of the blow and screen things out on the front line before it gets to the administration. They are often a second mother to the kids, and serve as the memory bank for the buildings. Our staff this year includes Angie Stanfield and Arnita Fender at the grade school, Tina Gaddy at the high school, and Rosalie Wildbur and Cheryl Kuhlig at the Unit Office.

-our bus drivers who continue to log several thousand miles each year without taking for granted the safety of kids. I've driven a bus and it is not the easiest log wagon to maneuver. Add 30 or 40 kids and some noise, along with traffic and it becomes a difficult and stressful position. Time schedules are not the most important issues with bus drivers. Being thorough and arriving safely are of the utmost importance. Our bus drivers this year are: Vic Ackerson, Maria Jones, Glenda Liggett, Larry Northrop, Machea Robinson, Dave Schymick, Allen Lucas, Steven Stortzum, Joe Hembree, Tera Bell, Tim Harmon, Shelley Fritch, Diona Griffy, Steve Wilson, Steve Burgener, Dave Skelton, Dawn Wilson, and Bryan West, Bus Maintenance Foreman.

-our school nurse Sara Wilson-Bushur. Wow, what a job she has! If you are ever in the building and walk by her small office, it looks like she's running an all day clinic. She cares for kids throughout our district and students in the SESE co-op every day. She cares for runny noses, skin conditions, flu bugs, viruses, ouchies, etc. She administers medications daily, dishes out hundreds of ice packs and band-aids every day, and does numerous other things to help. We dread the days she has to be gone because nobody wants to take her place! Her biggest quality is that she gives love and kindness to every kid that she works with.

-the opportunity to have a custodial staff to work with that always gets the job done, and does it in a fun fashion. We continually have improvements that we are proposing along with smaller projects to maintain and improve our buildings and grounds. There's an extra shine to our buildings because these people go the extra mile to make the building special. That crew includes Joe Smith, JoAnn O'Dell and Toby O'Dell at the high school, along with Billy Coble, Terry McKnelly, Lucinda Wiegel, and Gean Hembree at the grade school.

-the paraprofessionals for giving the extra help and lending a huge hand in our district. These people are sometimes the "unsung heroes" of student success by supplementing instruction and assistance as needed. The crew this year includes Debbie Allen, Stacey Burkett, Lori Yates, Kim Haun, Alice Robinson, Karen Williamson, Cathi Bailey, Denise Smith and Teresa Harper. This crew works in a variety of ways throughout the school day to assist teachers and students.

-our cooks who prepare and feed our students each and every day. These people are Dana Adams, Susan Webster, Belinda Bridges, Robin Hartsey, Trela Parks and Genay Hembree. This group sometimes gets the scrutiny but I think they have done a fabulous job of working hard every day to make our cafeteria better and more fun for the kids. They serve almost 700 kids in a short amount of time each and every day.

- our board members who have a position with the school district that perhaps is one of the most challenging. They make decisions about policies and procedures that will affect all kids, and provide direction in the operational services of the entire district. They also get many calls and hear most of the negative complaints that arise. These positions don't pay very well, but they spend a lot of time in meetings and in preparation for meetings and decision making. Our current board consists of Darren Bailey, President, Troy Britton, Vice President, Darrell McKnelly, Secretary, Mike Worthey, Tony Smith, Cecil Cochran, and Chris Rinehart.

The School Reach system will be our primary source for any weather-related cancellations, early dismissals, major announcements, and a few other necessary incidences. Regarding weather-related cancellations, it is necessary for us to call off school for ice or snow by 6:00 a.m. This could result in you being called by the system at that time of the morning. Occasionally, we call off school the previous evening, but that decision may not be made before 10:00 p.m. So, you could potentially be called at the listed times above. Please understand that you can have "School Reach" contact numbers listed for this purpose, and keep other emergency contact numbers at each school office for individual emergency communication.

The other main source that I will contact in the event of any happenings mentioned in the previous paragraph is WNOI-FM Radio 103.9 (Flora). I am no longer contacting all other radio and television stations unless for some odd reason our School Reach system is down. WNOI also posts announcements on their website at www.wnoi.com.

Last year, we created a Pesticide Registry for the purpose of notifying those parents/guardians in the event that we use pesticides on school grounds. We have adopted an Integrated Pest Management Plan where we will notify those registered in advance of any spraying of Roundup®, for example. The School Reach system will be used to make contact with those registered as well. If you would like to be included in this notification, please contact me with your information.

I believe that's all for now. Please have a relaxing, safe, and peaceful holiday season with your loved ones.