

August 15, 2012

To: Smitty

From: Monty Aldrich

THOUGHTS FROM THE UNIT OFFICE...

"**Accentuate the Positive**" is a popular song. The music was written by Harold Arlen and the lyrics by Johnny Mercer, and it was published in 1944. It is sung in the style of a sermon, and explains that accentuating the positive is the key to happiness. That's what we are building our school year on this year.

Life's too short and too critical to get in a rut and jump on the bandwagon of being negative. We shouldn't wonder why our kids are the way there are if and when they are dealt a negative attitude each day. Our administration is focusing on being positive and setting aside the daily nitpicking and whining that is really low on the priority totem pole of the school environment. We all can wrap ourselves up and spend a great deal of time with the "negative" while we have a high percentage of "positive" going on that we don't get to witness. Teaching and learning is the focus. Spending time observing and participating in teaching and learning is the action.

I continue to use the example of comparing someone's major crisis that really isn't much at all compared to walking the hallways of St. Louis Children's Hospital (or any children's hospital). I wish all of our students and staff could go there and just walk around all day. I can guarantee you that if you are feeling sorry for yourself because you are overworked, underpaid or mistreated, you'd feel better about yourself after an hour or so there. So, it is our goal to focus not on the negatives, gossip, and tidbits that fester, but on the positives that our students and staff lend to making lives better and happier.

Speaking of positives, our heating and air conditioning project is nearly completed at our high school. Putting a system in a 1948 has its challenges but the job was smooth and well-done by the crew hired. It is a pleasure to walk through the building and be comfortable. It has to have a positive effect on the student learning environment on a daily basis. We have also completed a number of other improvements including the addition of a large amount of dirt to the playground at the grade school. The issue was that when there was a large amount of rain (how long ago was that?), kids couldn't go out there for a week because it was a swamp. We raised the surface about 14 inches and crowned it for drainage. We have yet to sow grass due to the drought but that will be done late in the fall.

We have also developed a new program in the district called "Guided Learning". The philosophy of the Board of Education and administration is that all students are worth saving. Therefore, we have created an individualized program for students who have more severe discipline issues, truancy, or poor work ethic. We have renovated the "Old English Building" and will house students on a temporary basis to provide guidance in

achieving and getting back into the general population of the student body. I am excited about offering this at North Clay because we all have a vested interest in our students and will do whatever it takes to turn them around when needed. With that, a new classroom was built within the high school library (old cafeteria) to house students that were formerly attending in the renovated building. Come in and take a look and check out all of our improvements!

The Village of Louisville recently published information about Tax Increment Financing (TIF). This is intended as an incentive to generate new businesses within the city limits in the future. While this hope will hopefully do so, it will also have an impact on the school. The district's EAV will essentially stop growing or freeze at some point in a within the city limits while new improvements, construction, additions, etc. won't produce additional property tax dollars for our district. The offset of this is that the district could depend more upon General State Aid as a balance. The bad news with that is that the state has already cut our general state aid funding this year from 100% to 89.16%. That means that the district will have lost \$327,653.96 this year in funding from that source. I am sure that this will continue to be the trend. If this continues, the district will encounter staff cuts or layoffs, and other budgetary cuts. While TIF will be a good thing to help develop new business in the Village, my concern is that it is used in that manner. If this is in fact a tool for a few current businesses to take advantage of TIF that really don't need additional funding to accomplish what they want, then it should be of great concern for the school district and the public. Pay attention to this as it could be vital in keeping Louisville alive and growing if used properly. I simply don't want the district to suffer financially for a given few to prosper otherwise.

Something that should be recognized is that our USDA approved reimbursable lunch program is taking a drastic change. There is now a very complex and complicated system of change taking place that is mandated by the federal government. It took some years to get our lunch program back where we wanted it. This year, the USDA has enforced major changes in the lunch and breakfast menus. Concentration is on nutrition, calorie limitations, varieties in food groups, and serving portion limitations. Hopefully your child will make the transition to the new style of food that must be served. We have no flexibility on what is prepared and served so if you hear your child saying things such as he or she is not getting full, not liking particular items on the tray, no knowing what particular items on the tray are, etc., chances are this is due to the new regulations. We are exploring other ways of providing this service but it is going to be difficult.

I say this every year, but the best way to find out what's going on in the schools is to come in and visit. If you would like to volunteer in a classroom or event, contact the principal of the school. You will be amazed at the changes taking place in education and at the tasks at hand on a daily basis. Feel free to stop by and eat lunch with a child or grandchild. We welcome you!