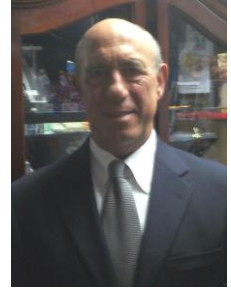


Volume VI - Farmington Middleton School District

Superintendent's Message September ~ October 2011



The staff of the Farmington / Middleton School District inspired me on their first day back at work after the summer break. I want to share that inspiration with you.

I had the first day of school jitters before an opening day gathering of staff in the FHS gymnasium. This was my first chance to meet collectively with all new and veteran teachers for the beginning of the 2011/2012 school year as SAU 61's Superintendent.

That morning, I awoke at 3:30 a.m. to touch up my speech. I wondered whether my message would resonate with all district employees. I worried that I might have bitten off more than I could chew.

During my remarks, I shared the expectations I expected of them and conversely what they should expect of me. Many of these expectations are centered on the work of Dr. William Daggett who speaks of the three R's (**rigor, relevance and relationships**) as they relate to best teaching practices. Others related to my past address which stressed the principals of Zig Zigler whose focus is **passion, purpose and peak** performance. These words, nationwide, show that schools with high expectations bring meaning to their content and will develop positive relationships that have high-performing students.

Both of these philosophies are important, but I believe that students will work hardest when they believe staff members care about them. Thus, building powerful relationships with students is critical.

Over the next few days, I asked the staff what they could do to begin building relationships with students during the first few weeks of school. Here are some of their answers:

- "Spend a few minutes at the beginning and during the year calling parents to inform them that their children have a place where they can feel comfortable and safe."
- "Make sure all of our students get greeted by a caring adult."
- "Just smile and greet the kids. Get to know their names."
- "Be sure that students introduce themselves to each other."

- “Emphasize that respect is the most important thing... teachers to children, teachers to their family members and also children to children.”
- “Make a special effort to look out for students who might be having a hard time.”
- “Ask students about their after-school activities. When possible, attend some of those activities.”
- “One thing very important for teachers to do is maintain a balance in their life and share that with students. Let our students know that we’re not just teachers, that we’re people outside of school, that we have interests and can have successes and failures. Share those with our students and model those for our students.”

Why did I focus the staff’s attention on the first few weeks of school and continuing the process and expectation throughout the year? Because I wanted the exercise to be meaningful and I was hoping that staff, inspired by their peers, would carry the exercise throughout the year. By doing so, I believe that we can set the stage for change, not only for our students, but for our teachers and the community.

Building meaningful relationships will result in large academic gains because our students will know that the Farmington Public Schools’ staff cares about them and wants them to succeed. Have a great and productive 2011 / 2012 school year.

Educationally yours,

Dr. Frank L. Mellaci
Superintendent SAU 61