Date March 9, 2012

Journal Entry #: 1

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Issue addressed (e.g. Student Discipline): Student Achievement

Colorado Principal Standard addressed: II Principals Demonstrate Instructional Leadership; d. High Expectations for all Students: Principals hold all staff accoutable for setting and achieving rigorous performance goals for all students, and empower staff to achieve these ambitious student outcomes.

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| Instructions: Please take time to reflect on your learning during the week or collectively over the course. The two-sided reflection template provides you the prompts for this introspection. Save this electronically and submit in accordance with the guidelines provided by your facilitator. | |
| What I Observed/Learned: TCAP Preparation | How This Will Impact My Leadership Practice |
| * Last week I spent a morning shadowing Veronica Anderson, principal of Grant Elementary School in District 11. Although Veronica shared many aspects of a typical day with me (discipline, breakfast and lunch programs, preparations to re-enter a high-needs discipline student) I was most struck by her leadership with staff and students for her high TCAP expectations. * One of the first things I noticed when I entered Veronica's office were the bags of apples and oranges piled in the corner. Grant Elementary School does several things to take care of students' physical needs on testing days including offering all students a couple slices of fruit, offering pieces of gum and allowing them to chew gum during the test, and giving each student a "gold" Ticonderoga" pencil to test with and letting them keep it when testing is over. * Veronica does morning announcements each day for the student body. This particular morning she spent a majority of announcements talking about the upcoming TCAP tests for 3rd, 4th, and 5th graders. She was very "excited" that students were going to be able to "show the state of Colorado what they could do." She reminded students that they had "practiced" and were "ready." She knew every student would do "great." It wasn't until later that I realized how important this short announcement was - not only did it speak to the students who would be testing, it also spoke to the students in preschool-2nd grade. This is something they would be doing eventually; the principal thinks this is extremely important; student in their own school would be showing "the state of Colorado what they could do!" Wow! * Mid-morning Veronica met with the entire class of third graders and their teachers. She gave the students a similar pep-talk to the one she gave earlier in the announcements. She also reviewed procedures such as washing hands, bathroom breaks, etc. Then she showed the students a variety of videos; these were set to popular and current songs, but the words were changed to reflect doing well on state tests. Both videos featured students and teachers. The kids loved it! They sang along with the words across the bottom of the screen and asked to do it again. Students saw TCAP testing as something to be excited about, but also to do your best on and take seriously. Teachers at Grant also take TCAP very seriously because of the high standards Veronica has set with students. | * I have to admit, I'm not a big fan of state testing. I feel it is costly and time consuming. However, state testing is not going to go away. When the leadership of a school rolls their eyes or complains about how much learning is lost due to testing, teachers quickly follow suit. This impacts how students view the test as well. Many high schools are starting to see purposeful mis-administrations by the students for the simple fact that students are wise and realize the test does not effect their grade, their GPA, or their graduation eligibility. Instilling pride in staff, students, and even parents may be one of the few tools we have right now in preventing this type of mis-administration. * As a leader I must be able to put my individual thoughts aside in order to create a culture that values "doing their best" no matter what the situation. By setting an expectation for high standards, and valuing this and other tests and evaluations, I am letting the staff know this is important to me. This in turn will be passed to students as well as parents. * Even though all grade levels do not test, it is important that the culture of the entire building is that of high expectations. Instruction delivered third grade and up, or instruction given only by core teachers is not all that influences test scores. Every teacher takes part in the development of every child, cummulatively resulting in his or her success or failure. |
| ***Critical Issues***   * State testing is important to the entire school community. How well a school does or doesn't do effects School Choice as well as where new home buyers choose to purchase a home. Right or wrong, people pay attention to test scores, make comparisons with other schools and districts, and make judgements about the quality of schools based on the scores they received. * State testing is a law. It is illegal to refuse the test. | |