

KESA – Relationships and Relevance: Part 2

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In last week's message, I wrote very broadly about KESA and how the state is moving forward with its accreditation efforts. This week I will hone in on the approach the Holcomb School District is using in this realm.

Within the KESA system, each school district is required by the Kansas State Department of Education to choose two goal areas of focus so as to impact the educational experience of the students. Through a process of surveys and engagement with the greater educational community, the Holcomb School District chose to focus their attentions on the two concepts of Relationships and Relevance. I applaud that wholeheartedly as I feel those are two of the essential elements that must be present in order for the students to realize their full potentials.

First, when we are talking about “relationships” here, we are referring to the relationships between the school system and the student and their families. For far too long, the approach to this area of concern in schools is we would hold an Open House and then have Parent Teacher Conferences a couple of times a year and call it good. While those events ARE important, they do NOT lead to the depth of relationship we want with our families. Rather, we want a relationship where we KNOW what makes each student tick and how best to meet his needs. This comes through hard, concerted efforts to engage with the students and their families. By bolstering these relationships, we believe we will be working together with the families as true partners to meet the needs of the students.

The area of “relevance” has to do with making the learning experiences that much more meaningful to the students. I learned long ago there are two different sorts of motivation: extrinsic and intrinsic. Extrinsic motivation deals with external factors motivating someone to do something – think winning a trophy or getting noticed by someone for doing something well. Intrinsic motivation deals with what motivates a person internally. Every person has SOMETHING that interests him. This shows up in how people choose to spend their time. They are INTRINSICALLY motivated to engage in that certain activity, be it gardening, playing sports, listening to music, or playing video games... Of the two types of motivation, intrinsic motivation is the most powerful as it goes back to personal choice. It is simply how we are hard-wired as humans.

So, in our efforts here in Holcomb regarding relevance, we are continually working to make the educational activities INTRINSICALLY motivating to the students. We do this

by learning the different learning styles of the students and by learning what interests them deep down. This takes great effort, but it is more than worth the time spent as the more we know about our students the better we are able to make the learning activities that much more meaningful to them. As a classroom teacher, I was always amazed by the sheer energy that existed around a learning activity once the hurdle of motivation was cleared. Honestly, it is a beautiful thing to behold. This is because the students are running to get to their learning activities and are excited by what they are doing. J

If you missed part one you can find it on the superintendent's page.