The Land of the Longhorns

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A Reflective, Fail-Friendly Environment

I have long held three things:

1. I am not smart enough to tell lies as I can’t keep track of them, so I simply tell the truth,
2. I believe it is essential to be a reflective person,
3. There are only TWO things in this world I REALLY control: my attitude and my actions.

Well, today you are in luck as I am concentrating on the importance of being a truly reflective person and the steps we are taking here in Holcomb to help others with this journey toward self-fulfillment, AND, at the same time, I am demonstrating the whole “just tell the truth” part of what I know. What a deal? Two for one! Yes, it is a major sale we are having for Labor Day. ☺

As I was contemplating what to write about this week, I fell into thinking about several conversations I have had of late about the importance of being a reflective person and how we only learn from trying things, objectively thinking about how it went, and then making adjustments to what we did (It really is THAT simple –it’s NOT like trying to make the PERFECT chocolate soufflé)… As I KNOW this is essential to personal growth, I dug into putting together my “words of wisdom” when I thought to myself, “Self, I BET you already wrote about this topic.” Sooooo, I went investigating, and lo and behold I discovered I HAD already covered this topic last year (See “Reflective Practices – Lessons Learned the HARD Way, March 19, 2019, USD 363.com), but that merely affirms the number one item mentioned above. The fact I wrote about this previously means it is a truth to me. So, check and check.

The reason I am talking about this AGAIN is due to the fact for the past two years I have stood before our USD 363 staff and challenged them to take risks and try something they have never tried before as they work with our students. The only requirements I threw to them is whatever they wanted to do had to be grounded in sound educational thinking, had to relate to their specific curricular standards, and they had to REFLECT on how “it” went and how they might adjust “it” in the future. To assist the teachers with this workspace, our principals (a GREAT group of leaders, by the way ☺) came up with the “Fail Forward” Grant Program – a classroom mini grant of $350 for a teacher to use to implement something “new” they have wanted to do in the past, but they hadn’t for a variety of reasons. Well, I am pleased to report last year THIRTEEN mini grants were awarded to teachers who tried a whole slew of different activities/experiences for their students. Some of the projects included the launching of the fourth grade newspaper, creating a Hunters’ Safety course, and purchasing a green screen for the video production class at the high school.

Well, **I am VERY pleased to relate we are continuing with this mini grant program, but this time each staff member will be able to request up to $400 to implement their Fail Forward project.** Bedsides the fact the students will experience different sorts of activities due to this approach, I am MOST excited about all of this as we are showing we truly honor the concepts of taking risks and thinking differently about getting things done as we provide for the students’ educational experiences. I KNOW this mindset will ultimately make all the difference for our greater educational family as more and more people will be motivated to move out of their respective comfort zones to discover new ways of taking care of business. Remember, Edison et al failed over one thousand times before inventing the light bulb. Grit, sticking to a vision, and being willing to take risks (as long as we reflect on our efforts) REALLY does make a difference.