

Superintendent Scoop –Communication is the Key

How many times in our lives have we thought to ourselves, “I should have talked to the person involved and have seen what they thought,” or even better, “I should have listened to what that person was saying.” Communication, especially two-way communication, is a difficult skill to learn and practice.

It seems one-way communication is becoming easier, and part of the reason is the increased use of technology. We can “google” almost any topic or can find a video on YouTube to discover how to fix anything! Websites are a wealth of information; Tioga Schools has their own website (www.tioga.k12.nd.us) and we post everything from lunch menus to sports’ schedules to school board policies. The struggle is keeping information relevant, and we continue to improve in that area.

Social media is also a great one-way communication tool. We can post on Facebook and many people will read it, and almost immediately will know what is happening. Again, the school has a Facebook page to share our students’ accomplishments in addition to sharing general information. Twitter is also popular, and our Facebook page is linked to Twitter. In January, the school will have its own app available which will make it easier for navigating on a cell phone. Watch for information on the Aptegy-built Tioga app!

With these technological tools, many assume that everyone is seeing updates and other information, and therefore, nothing else needs to be done to “get the word out.” Consequently, sometimes the information does not reach the people who need to know. Not only does that occur from the school’s end, but also on the patrons’ end. I have been told about posts on Facebook when parents are unhappy with a happening at school. I, myself, am on Facebook for my children and my high school classmates, so I don’t see any of these posts; do parents assume I am seeing their concerns? Other people do see those posts, and it may cause hurt feelings, misunderstandings, and a breakdown in communication—exactly what the school or parents don’t want!

As many do, I enjoy Facebook but I don’t believe it is the appropriate venue to vent frustrations including disappointments at school. When I am unhappy, I go directly to the source because that is the best way problems are discussed, and therefore, a place where two-way communication occurs. I encourage all our parents and other constituents to contact the person that is directly involved with your concerns. If it is a teacher, go to the teacher. If it is the superintendent, go to the superintendent. We all appreciate talking through problems face-to-face versus being blasted on Facebook.

Another chance to engage in two-way communication is by attending parent-teacher conferences on October 25 and 27 from 4:00-7:00 pm. Please meet your children’s teachers and have a conversation with them.

One other opportunity to encourage communication from you is by asking you to complete our surveys. We have surveyed teachers, plan to survey students, and have surveyed some parents. We are adding a survey for community members who do not have kids in school, too. We will have technology available at conferences to complete the surveys, and we also have paper copies for those who prefer “paper and pencil.” If you cannot come to school, we will mail the survey out to you. A misperception some have about surveys is nothing is done with the collected information so why should I fill them out? First reason: the results of these surveys will be used in our five-year accreditation review that is happening this spring. The school is required to collect and use information from our constituents to determine

what we do well and what we need to improve. We want our patrons to be forward and honest and to give credit where credit is due. Your opinion matters. Second reason: if you fill out the survey, you have a chance to win a \$30 gift card from Target! Target is a fun place to shop!

One of my goals is to improve the two-way communication in the district. Please be proactive, and I encourage you to always consider effective two-way communication instead of a negative one-way communication. By helping the school improve, you are supporting our kids. They do notice!