

Our Path to First Choice No. 29

Everyone,

Here is Path Note No. 29. My apologies. Typically, the update goes out on Wednesdays. This week, with all the events, the update has been held to Thursday. Thanks for reading.

Our Path Topic

This week's Topic is focusing on how the school board's Direction of District Needs is aligned with *First Choice*. Let's review the list.

What are WASD's most important needs over the next 3 to 5 years?

- a. Pre-Kindergarten for all who need it.
- b. More high school electives.
- c. Students interning, job shadowing, etc.
- d. Community partnerships, mentoring
- e. A District that cares (Measure through surveys, less complaints).
- f. Keeping up with Technology Education.
- g. Eliminating bullying (Peer education, surveys, teacher feedback, stop cliques, counselors with students, educate bullies and victims).
- h. Teach for success...not the test.
- i. Assess school security and adapt for changes.
- j. Every student graduates with a plan.
- k. Opportunities to try something new.
- l. Online learning opportunities at school.
- m. Collaboration between Board, administration, staff, support staff, and teachers (number of contacts, events, etc.).
- n. Board to be positive and responsive (staff and community surveys and elections).
- o. Produce moral, ethical students (discipline reports).
- p. Student respect for adults, staff, and fellow students (climate survey, staff and parent surveys).
- q. Stakeholder Voice needed.

These needs certainly appear to fit the concept of *First Choice*. Pre-kindergarten for all who need it is a valid need. Over 600 children from ages of birth to four years old qualify for subsidized pre-school programs. At this time, WASD has 91 students in five classrooms being served. Some families may choose to not participate, but the typical reason is they just can't afford such a program. WASD is applying for the P3 Initiative grant again this year for five additional classes of pre-kindergarten. This will include an additional 80+ students with about double the classrooms. That is a step in the right direction for these students. This will help more students be "school ready", and enhance their chances of success.

More electives, student internships, student opportunities for trying something new, every student graduates with a plan, keeping up with technology and online learning opportunities certainly fit the *First Choice* mold. A district that cares, eliminating bullying, community partnerships and mentoring, producing moral, respectful and ethical students, safety and security, teach for success and not the test are focused items for *First Choice*. In fact, they are very personalized.

Finally, stakeholder voice needed. That is extremely *First Choice*. WASD has just committed to *First Choice*, but with a long, long way to go. It is a journey down a path that will be focused on the individual student. Nevertheless, we still want to be everyone's *First Choice* eventually, and that is why some of the other needs the Board has pointed out as a good working relationship between various stakeholders. We are on our Path to First Choice, but patience will be needed. It will take years to realize, and many barriers and challenges will face us along the way. Nevertheless, it will be worth the journey.

Review for You

- Problem solving is a great skill to have. Is it the first step?

Events

- Reminder—March 30th there is no school due to the Good Friday holiday.
- Shrek the Musical starts on March 16th. Get your tickets now.
- Two-hour Delay—March 20th.

Piece of the Puzzle

- Retired teachers Kathy Helfrick and Ann DeDona are our Pieces of the Puzzle this week. These ladies continue to serve our teachers and students by volunteering at both Hooverville and Summitview in various capacities. Most recently, these ladies have taken a lead role in the WASD P3 Initiative. Their willingness to give of their time and talents is really appreciated! If you see or talk to these ladies, congratulate them!

Other Information

- We appeared to have a very quiet and uneventful day yesterday. As you are probably aware, March 14th this year was nationally publicized as “National Walkout Day for School Safety” for students. The walkout was advertised as a 17-minute event as a way to show support for safety in schools and respect to the 17 people who died in the Florida shooting tragedy. WASD administration chose to hold an alternative activity for students to talk about ways to improve safety. Our elementary schools talked about being kinder, being friends and how people should be treated. Our secondary schools asked students how they thought the District could be safer for students through a student perspective. Students were not permitted to leave. However, if they chose to leave, they would be given a detention (60 minutes) and permitted to return to class. The WASD event was to provide a safer alternative. The District had its solicitors’ (attorneys) support and an approach that had a plan for communicating publicly. The student feedback will be reviewed by administration, the WASD Safety Team, and the School Board. To our knowledge, no student left the buildings for the event.
- In light of safety, as years pass on and society is changing, our schools are seeing more and more difficulties in which some students are becoming extremely and challengingly verbal and physically combative. These are not just students with IEPs. Students without IEPs can be more challenging to address due to lack of resources and options. Meetings are taking place with judges, county commissioners, and agency leaders to try to formulate some answers and ways to deal with the behaviors we are facing daily in our schools. Although every individual has a right to file charges if injured/assaulted, it rarely has an impact on the behavior and sometimes frowned upon by outside officials. Therefore, that is

why the meetings are being conducted with the various people. Please know that this is not going unaddressed. It is a phenomenon that is bearing great weight on everyone trying to come up with ways to help these students and keep our students and staff safer. This is a societal issue, but WASD is working to try to find some solutions.

- Reminder—if a staff member is injured during the school day, it is important that the proper paperwork is complete. Contact your school office or Sharon Levick if you have questions.

Review Answers

- Problem solving is certainly a great skill to maintain. However, experts will first ask you if there is a problem to solve. Secondly, some experts will ask if you did root cause analysis. Before we go looking for solutions to problems, let's make sure if there is and what the problem is first--solving the problem becomes easier to narrow down.
- Some problem solving tools—PDCA/PDSA (Plan Do Check/Study Act), 5 Whys (also considered root cause analysis), Drill Down (breaking down to smaller manageable pieces to address—fishbone strategy some consider to be the same), Straw Man (Trial and Error), Is-Is Not Method, Six Sigma's DMAIC (Define, Measure, Analyze, Improve and Control).

Another Article

- The Life of a School Board Member (attached)

Final Thoughts

- *If I had an hour to solve a problem I'd spend 55 minutes thinking about the problem and 5 minutes thinking about solutions.*—Albert Einstein
- *If you can't explain it simply, you don't understand it well enough.*—Albert Einstein
- *We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them.*—Albert Einstein
- *Often the greatest challenge facing an organization is recognizing and acting on opportunity rather than solving a problem.*—Peter Ginter
- *Never bring the problem solving stage into the decision making stage. Otherwise, you surrender yourself to the problem rather than the solution.*—Robert H. Schuller
- *The easiest way to solve a problem is to clear your belief that it is a problem.*—Lina Shiny

Have a great rest of the week. Could the end of winter finally be near? You can't tell by the temperature, yet! Take care.

Tod