

WELLS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PRINCIPAL NEWSLETTER

July 22, 2016

**"Coming together is a beginning.
Keeping together is progress.
Working together is success."**

- Henry Ford

Dear Parents,

I have really enjoyed the opportunity to meet with staff to learn more about WES and to build positive relationships and discuss what will undoubtedly be an amazing school year.

New this Year at WES!

PBIS: What is PBIS?

This stands for Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports. "Research says we have to:

- Teach
- Model
- Practice
- Reward...if we want to see changes in behavior.

PBIS: is a program that has 5 basic fundamental concepts which lead to positive behavior

- Use positive strategies
- Establish a positive environment
- Teach positive behavior skills
- Reinforce positive behavior
- Respond to inappropriate behavior

PBIS is NOT a curriculum - it is a *framework* to identify needs, develop strategies, and evaluate practice toward success.

PBIS IS a process for *teaching* children appropriate behavior and providing the supports necessary to *sustain* that behavior." (PBIS Parent Training)

Simply put, it is incumbent upon us as educators to explicitly teach the expectations of the school to all students. We can only expect what we teach and such explicit instruction really works. Consistency as it relates to teaching procedures, routines, and rules is essential.

Instead of walking into schools and seeing rules such as *No Running, No Yelling, No Hitting*, school-wide expectations for appropriate behavior are stated positively. Moreover such expectations are taught regularly. There are common expectations for all areas of the school. What this program does for schools is incredible. I am very excited to bring this to Wells and to

collaborate with teachers and staff to make this a highly effective program. This will dovetail exceptionally well with our Core Values. As we speak, staff members are coming up with their guiding beliefs about student achievement. This will be incorporated into our presentation. More details will be available in the weeks to come to include **a school incentive store and bus incentive competition.**

You will hear from us regularly as it relates to communication between school and home as I believe in communication early and often.

Communication:

I am always honest and direct in my communication. Trust is something that matters greatly to me. I am a big believer in the concept of team. I have found in all organizations that it is far easier to point out flaws and to criticize. Let's face it, stories of a positive nature are the last to air on the nightly news. And then there is social media. So often, this allows for the proliferation of negativity and becomes a platform for gossip, hearsay, and rumors. I have no use for any of that and believe that face to face communication is the key element in building successful organizations. I actually had a teacher at a previous school tell me that there was a page dedicated to criticizing staff members. I remember this person was very upset. My advice was,

- 1) "Why read it?"
- 2) Do you really care what someone who resorts to social media to criticize you or other staff thinks? I said I don't and I never will."

I am an optimist. I believe in talking about the great things that are happening rather than dwelling on negativity. I truly believe that attitudes are contagious. School climate and morale permeate everything we do. To this day, I receive messages from parents, staff, and superintendents from schools I have been at requesting that I return to their schools to be the principal. My response is simple. I really appreciate the kind words but I am where I want to be and have moved enough in my career. I am in Wells for the long haul and want it no other way.

Together, I know that we are going to help WES become the best school in the state of Maine!

What Matters Most in Schools:

What I have started in schools where I have worked is creating an ongoing, year-long google slide show. For events, classroom projects, activities, etc. we will have a presentation that we add to all year long and this serves to remind us of what an amazing school climate we have. I like to have this slide show running during meetings to remind all stakeholders that we are here for every child, every classroom, every day. Moreover this reminds everyone present at the meeting that every decision, whether it's with our board of trustees, administration, with our staff, or our parents, it all comes down to what is in the best interests of our students.

If we make decisions in the best interest of our kids, adults will be happy. We have to remember, it's not about what's convenient for adults. It's about what's great for kids. Sometimes we will agree to disagree and that is okay.

Why I don't like being in my office:

As the new principal at WES, how do I know what's going on if I'm not out there and if I'm not seeing first-hand? How can I better support our teachers, our staff, our parents and our students if I'm not seeing what they are doing on a daily basis? This is the only way I know how to lead and I truly love being out where education is taking place.

Inspiring Meetings

While I know it is summer break, I cannot tell you how excited I am at the number of staff who have already been in to meet with me. Many more are scheduled to meet with me. They are incredible, have awesome ideas, truly care about kids, and are excited to get the year started. I cannot say enough about how awesome the WES staff has been since I first arrived. I know that the partnership between home and school will be awesome this year!

Have a great week!