

Boosting School Morale in the Midst of Hardship

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If my school was experiencing hardship in the areas of parent involvement, teacher morale, crowded classrooms, building maintenance, student discipline, and administration time management, I would first talk to my administration team in our weekly meeting. I would have given them a heads up about the agenda, so that they can come ready to share any problem solving ideas. Then, I would consult other administrator mentors or groups to help support me in these endeavors. As a teacher, a lot of educators want the administrators to collaborate in order to plan events well for the students. In the same way, these issues can be brought to the attention of the teachers. It might be more beneficial to talk about these issues at our monthly team lead meeting first. Then, each team lead will speak to their teams in a small group setting and add their ideas onto a school-wide editable sheet. This will help the teachers to buy in to what we are accomplishing and to shed grace on certain maintenance issues. This teamwork approach is supported in the PSEL 2b which states, “Act according to and promote the professional norms of integrity, fairness, transparency, trust, collaboration, perseverance, learning, and continuous improvement.” (National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2015).

Besides collaboration, I would definitely get PSO (or PTO) involved as far as showing appreciation to our teachers with a cart with treats. I would take time to keep my daily check-ins while making eye contact to make each teacher feel seen and to reinforce that they matter. I would have the office staff conduct certain contests to get staff talking and getting to know each other. My school has done a few games this year during meetings and simple contests during the day. As teachers get to know each other, they will want to return each day to this environment that fills them up like a gas pump fills a car. (West Ed. 2014). So as you can see, collaboration is important, but only in an environment that encourages each teacher and does not burden them. There needs to be a balance that an administrator would need to show discernment in bringing

some challenges to the forefront to work on as a school. Bringing too much can exasperate the teachers and we want them to be supported in order to support learning in each classroom.

Along with collaboration and creating an environment of affirmation, there are several other strategies for improving a thriving school community such as: making tasks meaningful by connecting them to teaching and learning, supporting success on challenging tasks, and providing opportunities for meaningful collaboration. All five of these strategies for boosting school morale can be done on a staff level and on a parent level, since we are all supporters of our children's learning. In order to connect with parents, regular events can be open to the public in order to support parent interest. All school-wide events need to be open to parents such as field day, track and field day, parent night prior to school, night to earn money for school functions, to support teachers, and for building maintenance, etc. It may take a well-organized process to check parents in, possibly ahead of time digitally, but it will be worth it. If parents feel welcome and as participants, they will take interest in what goes on at our school. My last school did require each parent to volunteer twenty hours of their time each school year. This time could be done by purchasing paper for the office, done at home, or in person at school. Each parent would log their hours in a school program. Field trips would count too! It worked beautifully and pushed parents to be involved so that their child would be supported in their academics.

In conclusion, a learning community's morale can be boosted by collaboration, building an environment of affirmation, making tasks meaningful by connecting them to teaching and learning, supporting success on challenging tasks, and by providing opportunities for meaningful collaboration. John Heywood once said, "Many hands make light work." This has become a

well-known idiom, since it often takes a village to accomplish a task well, such as in education. Administrators are only one piece of the puzzle to create a school that thrives academically.

Resources

- National Policy Board for Educational Administration. (2015). *Professional Standards for Educational Leaders*, 2b.
https://www.npbea.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Professional-Standards-for-Educational-Leaders_2015.pdf
- WestEd. (2022). *Four Research-Informed Approaches to Boosting Teacher Morale and Motivation*.
<https://www.wested.org/wested-bulletin/insights-impact/boosting-teacher-morale-motivation/>