



Creating a Re-Set – An Open Letter

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For many, last school year was a struggle for educators, administrators, students, and parents. The term “normal” is not what educators witnessed in our classrooms, hallways, bathrooms, lunchrooms, and other areas within the school grounds. Vast amounts of disrespect became, in some cases, the norm. I predict that we will continue to struggle with students not knowing how to “play School” for another three years before we regain a sense of normalcy within our buildings.

Veteran as well as new teachers experienced verbal abuse from both students and parents. Students treated each other with a lack of kinship, kindness, and respect. Those who suffered the most were the outstanding students who wanted to learn and who tried to be kind to others. Teachers who tried to build relationships and work hard on creative lessons felt underappreciated and ignored. The phrase, “I am not doing that,” became a common term from students. Our students and staff forgot the rigor of school and learning. And by the time we tried to regain some control of our buildings it was too late, and we felt defeated.

For the longest time we have asked for teachers to “buy in.” As we all know, this means having teachers support each other and the efforts to make changes within the school, when in reality some educators feel that this is not *their* battle. I assure you, if we don’t work together, this will not pass, and we will see more and more teachers leaving their profession. We must bond together to fight the battles we are now facing in education so that last year’s negative experiences are not repeated. We must ask ourselves if we want a repeat of last year. In so many cases the answer is, “No.” That means we need a re-set within our schools and part of that re-set is our willingness to make the changes necessary to provide a safe and supportive environment for our staff and students.

This year we need to embrace the concept of “**All Means All.**” Every educator and administrator need to be on the same page. No longer can one teacher say, “I am not enforcing *that* rule.” This sends a mixed message to our students. We also need to stop saying that these rules need to come from the top (Administration). Let’s be honest, that mantra has not worked – student handbooks have been around for 50 years, and we still have some teachers not enforcing the rules. “I don’t care if they wear a hoodie,” is a prime example of top-down school expectations that are not enforced. Our students crave consistency, and we are not providing that based on teachers’ personal preferences of enforcing rules.

In order to re-set the upcoming school year, we need to hold each other accountable, have honest discussions about what is working, and present a strong and unified front to our students. This means seeking 4 or 5 non-negotiables that all of us must enforce. This will not be easy and may need some personal reflection, “Am I the obstacle?” “Will my lack of enforcing these expectations lead to another year of struggle, and in some cases, students running our schools?”

If you don’t want to repeat last year, then now is the time to step up and create some common expectations for yourself and your students. Once again, for this to work we all must be on the same page, “All” really does mean “All.”

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