

HOPE 2.0

February 2, 2018

Everything Matters

Public schools rarely consider themselves “businesses” in the sense that they have a customer base and a bottom line. After all, the right to a free public education is provided in the state’s constitution, though not in the federal constitution (but we will leave that for another HOPE Note). Although I’ve discussed the concept of customer service in a previous note, I feel compelled to return to this topic, but with a slightly different spin.

As we press toward the success of every learner, we must first recognize and fully embrace the fact that everything matters. From the cleanliness of our bathrooms, to the quality of the food served in our cafeteria. Everything matters. From the level of clutter that appears in our main offices, to the way in which we greet the public at our district office. Everything matters. From the time we spend to resolve a parent complaint to the quality of our lesson plans. Everything matters. If you’re not convinced, ask the folks at a small start-up company out of Seattle, Washington. You may know them by the name of Starbucks.

Started in 1971, the Starbucks Coffee, Tea and Spice store had one goal: to serve a quality cup of coffee. Later, former CEO Howard Schultz greatly expanded that goal by daring to ask the question: “What would happen if you took the quality coffee bean tradition of Starbucks and merged it with the charm and romance of the European coffeehouse?” (Michelli, 2007). That simple question helped to revolutionize the coffee industry in ways that even Schultz did not imagine. Early critics passed his vision off as a short-lived gimmick, and many wrote the early increase in sales off as a “West Coast Yuppie Fad”, scoffing at the very idea of paying \$3.00 for a cup of coffee (Michelli, 2007). Today, Starbucks has more than 11,000 stores worldwide and their logo ranks with the likes of McDonalds in brand recognition. They understood early on that everything matters. They took painstaking steps to ensure that every staff member understood why they existed and the experience they wanted to provide. Everything mattered.

So what does Starbucks have to do with Susquehanna Township School District? We are not cranking out venti-nonfat-caramel lattes with a dash of cinnamon, right? Rather, we are shaping lives and guess what? Everything matters. *Anyone can serve coffee, but not everyone can convince millions of people to pay \$7.00 per cup.* Just ask Dunkin’ Donuts, Seattle’s Best and even McDonalds. Not everyone can provide a complete and quality experience. At Susquehanna Township School District, we want to provide that same comprehensive and quality experience within the learning environment.

And, where does it start? It starts with **believing** that we can do it and then **persevering** until we get there. It starts with ensuring that our buildings, our bathrooms, our main offices, and our hallways are clean and ready for students and staff use each and every day. It starts with caring enough to write a quality lesson plan to meet the needs of today’s students. It starts with answering the telephone with a smile. It starts with putting processes in place that ensure that we work smarter and not harder. It starts with our commitment to inspect what we expect at all levels of the district. It starts with fully investing, heart and mind, into our Journey of HOPE. It starts with the understanding that **what** we do matters but **how** we do it matters even more.

The folks at Starbucks are not geniuses. They simply established a set of values and refused to compromise the quality of their product and the experience of their customers. Starbucks amassed a

workforce who were insanely focused on achieving that vision. The Susquehanna Township School District is positioned to become world class. We must be committed and unwilling to compromise on our core values and fully embrace our mission of the success of every learner if we are to become the “Starbucks of Public Education”. This is not a gimmick. It is fully within our grasp.

So, the next time you are in line waiting for your grande-half caf-peppermint mocha, ask yourself how can you bring the experience that brought *you* to the local Starbucks back to our students, families and each other in the Susquehanna Township School District. Even if you don’t frequent the local coffee house, think about your favorite restaurant, hotel, donut shop or gym and ask yourself, “How can I bring *this* experience to our district?” Then, set out to accomplish that experience in your role within the district. Everything matters!

Have a wonderful weekend!
Tamara Willis, Ph.D.
Superintendent

Piece of the Puzzle



This week’s Piece of the Puzzle is Jordan Barrie at the Middle School. Mr. Barrie demonstrated the spirit of innovation in using the Donors Choose website <https://www.donorschoose.org/> to purchase 30 copies of the novel titled *Landscape with Invisible Hand* for our students. We appreciate all that you do for our students!