

HOPE NOTE

September 29, 2018

Just One

According to the Harvard University Center on the Developing Child, “*The single most common factor for children who develop resilience is at least one stable and committed relationship with a supportive parent, caregiver, or other adult.*”

“Like so many nights before, he had physically assaulted my mother as she tried to keep him from entering the house. This time, he had kicked the front door completely off of the hinges. Once again, the police came and took him away to “sleep it off”. After he had left, my mother used a large butcher’s knife, wedged into the doorjam, as a makeshift lock. It was the only way to keep the winter air out of the house. That night, we all slept downstairs on the floor in our living room so that we could escape quickly if the police released my father sooner than usual. Anxiety robbed me of sleep that night. I made frequent trips to the bathroom, vomiting and at one point I soiled my pajamas. I felt so ashamed that my mother, who was exhausted from fighting my father, was now unable to sleep because she had to clean up the messes I had made throughout the night. I remember feeling like I was a selfish and disappointing child.” This is **my** quote.

The next day at school, Mrs. Jennings told me that I was special and that she was proud of me. She told me that I was smart and that I was a great reader. I believed her. My grades never suffered, I remained in the accelerated program, and the rest of my teachers never knew about the *many* nights that mirrored this one. I believed Mrs. Jennings.

Earlier this school year, in my January 5th HOPE Note, I formally introduced the district to the elephant in our room: increasing behavioral issues across all settings of the district; behaviors that had slowly eroded our capacity to provide a safe and supportive learning environment for students and shifted our focus from learning. We employed our leadership model to provide a structure for how we have addressed what has been a monumental task, and I chronicled our progress throughout subsequent HOPE Notes. If you are unfamiliar with our leadership model, visit the district website at www.hannasd.org to read my HOPE Note from October 13, 2017 in which I explain the model in great detail. All of my HOPE Notes are archived on the district website.

At the close of last year, we were deploying our action plan which is stage 4 of the model. Deployment included the viewing of Paper Tigers on our closing day and hosting a discussion on the growing body of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) research. Over the summer, teams came in to revise the Student Success Manual (Code of Conduct), map the MTSS process to more effectively connect students to interventions, revise our PBIS banners and create PBIS lesson plans. Many also attended training for Developmental Designs (6-12) and PATHS (K-5), our social-emotional learning programs.

We had a positive and energizing launch of our school year and we continue to take risks, every day, in our efforts to build positive relationships with students. Thank you!

Now it’s time to move into stage 5 of our leadership model, ***Measure and Monitor Progress***. Everyone likes the adrenaline rush of a successful launch, but real change requires self-reflection and ongoing feedback. That’s where you come in! Next week, we will be asking everyone who is associated with one of our buildings to complete a survey, telling us how you think our efforts to SOAR are going. The survey is not just for teachers. We are all impacted by student behavior and we want to hear from everyone. The surveys are electronic and they are brief. We promise.

Principals have been charged with releasing the survey during our next early dismissal day and the results will be viewed immediately at district office, so please take time to share your thoughts! Students will also receive a survey link next week on our early dismissal day. Principals will notify staff how and when the surveys will be administered to students, so stay tuned. We will then survey staff and students **each month** in order to make the necessary adjustments along the way. Parents will be surveyed twice during the school year. Takia Colston-Krow will administer our parent surveys.

As promised at the opening ceremony, we will carefully consider your feedback as we continue to deploy our SEL initiative. Why? Because the impact of the elephant in **our** room is too significant for us to ignore.

The opening quote says it all, one relationship can shift the negative path of a child's life. For many of our students, **YOU are Mrs. Jennings**. You are all that they have. YOU are that one relationship. It's a heavy burden at times. But, if not us then who? If not now, then when? Let's keep pushing forward in the service of our students and each other. We may just have another superintendent in our ranks. 😊

Enjoy the rest of your weekend everyone!

Tamara Willis, Ph.D.
Superintendent of Schools

Piece of the Puzzle



Please join me in thanking Mrs. Sangeeta Guwalani for the support that she has provided to the staff and students of Sara Lindemuth/Anna Carter Primary School. Her calming and compassionate presence is so greatly appreciated and we thank her for being a part of the Hanna family!