A PRINCIPAL'S REFLECTIONS

EDUCATION IS A REFLECTIVE PRACTICE. THIS BLOG PROVIDES
MY VIEWS ON EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP, EFFECTIVE
TECHNOLOGY INTEGRATION, BEST PRACTICES, AND CREATING A
STUDENT-CENTERED LEARNING CULTURE.

THURSDAY, JUNE 10, 2010

Tips for Establishing Meaningful Partnerships

This past Tuesday I attended our Annual Senior Academic Awards dinner. It was a great event where New Milford High School students received over $65,000 in local scholarships. For three hours student after student came up to the podium to receive various scholarships that they had worked so hard for over the course of four years. One particular presentation provided the motivation for this post. It was at a point in the evening where the Raymond "Hap" Harrison scholarship was presented. In short, this scholarship is endowed by Adam Leitman Bailey, an NMHS alumnus (Class of 1988), who was the school's second Distinguished Alumni Award winner in 2008. The recipient of this annual scholarship receives $10,000 the first year of college, which is then renewable for the remaining years with a G.P.A. of 3.5 or higher.

Obviously, this is a prestigious scholarship, but there is much more behind this. Ever since Adam won the distinguished alumni award he and I have formed a partnership to benefit the students of NMHS in many ways besides financially. We quickly realized that we share a determination and commitment to enhancing and improving educational experiences for NMHS students. Through extensive communications and face to face meetings we have developed an ever-evolving vision that has led to some significant opportunities that include:

1. Field trips: History students have participated in walking tours of lower Manhattan the last two years where Adam has shared his extensive knowledge on the history of the financial district. The trip always culminates with a working lunch for all of the students (his treat).
2. Summer internships at his prestigious firm.
3. Mock trials on the campus of NMHS.
4. Participation in our Career Day Program.
5. Facilitation of all Ray "Hap" Harrision scholarship winners into high profile internships at institutions such as Columbia University Medical Center.

This is just one example of a successful partnership that has greatly benefited my students. Some other successful partnerships that have been established at NMHS include the following (it should be noted that there is no cost to the school, staff, or students):

* Madison Institute: Professional Development
* CBS News: Public relations/Press (5 news stories this year)
* Stevens Institute of Technology: NSF GK-12 Program (S.T.E.M.)
* AverAcademy Showcase School (AverMedia): Technology (document cameras, digital pens) and
   professional development
* Wine & Roses: Worked with our Business Practice Firm class and assisted them with their virtual
   floral business (Wizard of Vase Florists)
* My PLN!!!!!

There are no set guidelines for educators on how to establish successful, sustaining partnerships. In my opinion schools must place more of an emphasis on this endeavor. Administrators in particular must be willing to excerpt a great deal of time to seek out and foster these relationships that are mutually beneficial to all parties. I have found that the successful establishment of the various partnerships is also dependent on the following:

- Flexibility and an open mind
- Effective communication
- Establishment and consensus on a shared vision
- Commitment and follow-through on both ends
- Sharing of student benefits with all stakeholders
- Patience
- Empower and support teachers in establishing their own partnerships
- Reach out to alumni and local businesses
- Leverage social media to connect with potential partners

The formation of partnerships is yet another way to provide meaningful learning experiences to students where the benefits can extend well beyond the instructional day. I would love to hear about specific partnerships that you have established and the impact they have had or are having on your students. Any additions to my list of tips would be greatly appreciated as well.