Student Engagement Visible in District Classrooms

Last week, during the first week of the school year, students across the district were highly engaged in instruction. The lessons prepared by district staff involved students being up and moving around the room, interacting with peers to verbalize their thinking process, writing about their learning in journals, and forming their own definitions based off of examples and non-examples. All classrooms observed last week were utilizing instructional strategies and non-negotiables which have been a focus of professional development over the past few years. The level of student engagement observed and student accountability for learning will have a positive impact on student achievement across the board. It is exciting to view our staff members creating situations in the classrooms which lead our students to be problem solvers and critical thinkers. The 2015-16 school year is off to a fantastic start!

Mr. McDavitt creating an anchor chart, with the help of his students, during instruction.

Two students discuss their learning, which was documented in their journals.

A sample of the high school geometry engaging activity involving examples and non-examples of vocabulary terms.
**Primary School**

Our first week of school was phenomenal, with smooth transitions and happy students, thanks to the long hours of preparation and intentional planning by staff. In meetings the previous week, we reviewed instructional protocols for building procedures, emergency evacuation drills, and behavior expectations, and implemented the 4 Rs building-wide: be respectful, be responsible, be really safe, and be ready to learn. We analyzed the results of our school culture staff surveys to identify strengths and areas needing improvement, which we’ll include in our Building Continuous Improvement Plan. We also celebrated accomplishments, such as high percentages of students scoring proficient or advanced on our Discovery Education reading and math tests, and increased MAP scores in grades 3-4. K-2 students started learning cooperation strategies and classroom resources the very first day, and Early Childhood students join us on Aug. 24. In the coming week, we will finalize our building’s Professional Development Plan and goals for this school year. We begin benchmark testing using both Discovery Education and the Gates-MacGinitie reading assessment in order to determine students needing targeted interventions through RtI and Title I. All the PS staff are extending warm welcomes to our co-teachers and new school nurse.

**Elementary School**

The rain on the first day of school did not dampen our spirits at the Elementary School. Students, parents and teachers arrived early and were excited to get the year started. Teachers spent the first week of school getting to know their students, collecting baseline data and fostering teamwork. Throughout the building you could see students practicing procedures and collaborating to solve problems. PHES is also working hard to launch our semester one theme: *Cultivating Creativity through the GREAT OUTDOORS*. Art infusion, research and problem based learning will continue to be fostered throughout this school year.

This second week of school, we will practice our safety drills and start our kids of character “High Five” recognition program. Teachers are looking forward to our 4th annual Curriculum Night which will be held this Tuesday at 6:30pm where we will share our goals for the school year with parents. Teachers will also meet this week to re-calibrate their expectation for scoring student writing so that we can begin to collaboratively score our baseline writing samples. Creating positive relationships in our classrooms continues to be the priority, but we are also anxious to dive into the curriculum this first full week of school! It’s going to be another great week at PHES.
**INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL**

The Intermediate school is off to a great start! Students have been engaging in “get to know you” activities and team builders in their classes. We are striving to build positive teacher-student relationships; this is a top priority. The more we know about our students the better we can meet their needs and help them achieve. Time has also been spent with students setting goals. Goals help with motivation and studies show that it increases students’ success rates. Please ask your child about his/her goals. Teachers will be checking in with students about their progress. We will be celebrating successes!

Students have also been learning about routines, procedures and expectations. This is another priority for us. Once we have mastered these, it will help us focus on learning. Time has also been spent on learning where classes are and how to open lockers. This is always a biggie! We are making great strides!

In the library, students are reviewing how to determine a “Just Right Book” and are checking them out through the self-checkout system! It is exciting to see their enthusiasm regarding book selection and having time to read!

We are looking forward to an amazing year full of learning and fun!

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**MIDDLE SCHOOL**

Our first week of school concluded last week with a positive school climate activity sponsored in partnership with Pleasant Hill’s Family Worship Church student ministries and our Friend’s of Rachel (FOR) Club & PSC fundraising efforts from last school year. This joint opportunity brought Jon Pritkin to our middle school building to present to our students and staff on the afternoon of Friday, August 21. Diagnosed at an early age with a severe learning disability, Jon endured cruel and relentless taunting, ridiculing, and bullying from his school peers and neighborhood children on a daily basis. Even some of Jon’s own teachers said surprisingly callous things that furthered his struggle with low self-worth and sinking sense of personal value. Today
with the 20 years of success in his field and the appreciation and recommendation of countless organizations, Jon travels across the United States, Europe, the Middle East, and Asia using his own story to positively and effectively challenge students of all ages to address the widespread issues of bullying, poor self-image and overcoming personal obstacles.

Jon opened our assembly by performing astonishing “feats of strength.” Whether it was using his teeth to bend steel rebar, shattering a baseball bat over his leg, or rolling up a frying pan—a feat that earned him a place in the 2009 Book of Guinness World Records—students and staff were riveted by his demonstrations of physical strength. With the undivided attention of the crowd, Jon tackled some of the very real and important self-worth issues facing today’s students.

**High School**

The first week of the 2015-2016 school year at PHHS was a tremendous success. On Tuesday, students were greeted by student council members as they entered the building. The student council members prepared the school for the big day by decorating the commons area and front windows. Furthermore, StuCo placed the name of every student on a rooster or star throughout the building. The Pride of the Hill Marching Band was in on the welcome as the sound of school song filled the hallways as students started their day. It was a great day to be a Rooster and Chick!

In the classroom, students are getting back into the routine and adjusting to a new tone schedule. This schedule will allow all students to have an academic time during the middle of the day to focus on their homework, reading, or ACT preparation activities.

The week was full of school spirit and excitement. It is shaping up to be a great 2015-2016 school year.

**Special Services**

We have had a fantastic start to our school year. This is due to our amazing special services staff. Our staff has really worked hard to ensure that the students on their caseloads are set to go with all needed supports, schedules and current plans. In the brief time they have been back before school starts, they have hit the ground running and have gotten the job done. Thank you to all teachers and support staff!

The Special Services Department currently has staff trained and certified as In-District Autism Consultants (IDACs). IDACs receive intensive training and a certification testing provided by Project Access, the primary service provider for autism services in the state of Missouri. Currently Tammy Prewitt is a State Certified Autism Consultant as well. This training focuses on the identification of students with autism and how these students can best be served in the classroom to help them reach their academic potential. IDACs serve as
consultants for IEP meetings, staffings, behavior intervention plan meetings, and as mentors to teachers who deal with ASD in their classrooms. They are also available to answer questions from parents and staff and provide resources regarding ASD, if needed. These staff members can also assist with students with other disabilities.

On the first day of school, Dr. Gallagher, Mrs. Prewitt, and Miss Hamilton visited each co-teaching classroom and presented them with a new book *Co-Teaching That works.*

Friday the Special Services Department presented carnations to the Special Education teachers, Paras and Co teachers in appreciation for all the work they put into having the best school start ever. Kudos to the PHSD staff.
**TECHNOLOGY**

The technology department has been working very hard to get all equipment updated and running well for the new school year! This summer was spent updating, re-imaging and setting rooms back up after cleaning. In addition to the “normal” summer work, servers and switches were also updated to build a faster network for our district. The completion of the updates to servers and switches is the first phase of planned updates which will take effect over the next two years. Inter-district fiber connection will also be updated, more wireless access points added, and the MOREnet connection increased to provide more access to the internet. We hope everyone has a great year and enjoys the progress being made to the network.

**PLEASANT HILL ACTIVITIES… “IT’S A GREAT DAY TO BE A ROOSTER/CHICK!”**

Pleasant Hill Activities… “It’s a GREAT Day to be a Rooster/Chick!”

Looking forward to a strong year for Pleasant Hill Activities!

Highlights:

1. Welcome Back! We are gearing up for an exciting year at PHHS and PHMS. We hope you help us enjoy the ride!
2. Football: New Head Coach Greg Smith and the Roosters will begin their 2015 home season this coming Friday vs. the Warrensburg Tigers; 7pm. The boys had a rough trip to Smithville this past week as they lost to the Warriors. Regardless, the team is motivated and thinking “big picture” as it moves into week two and the rest of the season.
3. Softball: Head Coach Mickey Fleeman, new assistant coach Christy Reeves and the Chicks softball team opened the fall season opening in the Greater Kansas City Softball Invitational. On the first day of competition, the chicks went one and one with a loss to the 4A State Champions Lee’s Summit and win vs Raytown South. They will continue competition this week with varsity games in the tournament on Tuesday and Thursday. The JV Squad begins play on Monday at the LSR7 Tournament at Legacy Park.
4. Volleyball: Head Coach George Creason welcomes new assistant Cassy Murphy to the staff along with second year Chicks assistant Kristen Juliette. The Chicks volleyball squad is ready to roll this week. They will host Summit Christian Academy on Tuesday with JV and Varsity matches beginning at 5pm. They will host Smithville the following Tuesday as they are excited to get the season going.
5. Boys Soccer: The Roosters welcome new Head Coach Edson Ortiz and assistant Nicole Ortiz to the boys soccer program. The Roosters will start the 2015 campaign with a road game at Pembroke Hill HS; 5pm. They will play their first home match Thursday vs. Warrensburg also at 5pm.
6. Girls Golf: Coach Eric Bloom and the Chicks golf team began their fall season with a tournament hosted by Ray-Pec HS. They are a young squad but very willing to improve and learn the game. The ladies have a home match at Country Creek on Tuesday vs. Harrisonville and Richmond.
7. Pride of the Hill: Director, Mr. Adam Twenter and the Pride of the Hill band welcomes Kristin Langemach to the program as the Assistant Director. The band had a successful camp earlier this month and looks forward to its first performance this coming Friday night at the home varsity football game. They will have four competitions this fall beginning in October.
8. We are looking forward to a brand new school year and the excitement that encompasses Pleasant Hill activities. Watching our students grow educationally and socially is what drives what we do. Come be a part of the celebration and support our activities programs!

Help us inform you by checking in on our website… www.pleasanthillactivities.org. Advertising opportunities are available which will assist our activities department. Thank you for your support and Have a great week! (Twitter…@phhsactivities)