

Chalkboard

By

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Okay, time to check your homework from last week. You do remember that you had homework? You were to compare the core beliefs espoused by each group taking part in the school board's "Zone Meetings". From the provided list of core beliefs, you were to ask yourself the following questions- "How are the statements alike? How are they different? Is what I believe about education at Gentry represented in the statements? How could all the statements be combined to form a representative set of core beliefs for the district? What would those statements be?"

So let's begin checking your work. What do the four following statements have in common? *Safe learning environment. A good learning environment is necessary. A physically and emotionally safe learning environment is necessary. Safe physical environment for learning.*

If you responded, "safe (good) learning environment", you would be correct. If you responded, "Those were all core beliefs from the school board's six zone meetings", you would be correct. If you responded, "Each has a direct correlation to one of the school board's core beliefs established last June, '*A safe and healthy learning environment is conducive to learning*'", you would be correct.

Had you attended each Zone Meeting, you would have been able to answer or would have known, when asked the question "When it comes to the education of the students of Gentry, I (we) believe..." that the concept of a safe learning environment was a universal theme talked about at 6 of 6 meetings. As noted above, it made the priority core belief list in 4 of the 6 public Zone meetings.

So what does "safe learning environment" mean? In some offered opinions it represented the physical condition of school buildings. Are the classrooms adequately lighted? Are they warm/cool? Clean? Are they a physically healthy setting?

Another take-off was having an environment in which the child is safe from bullying behavior of other students. That statement was complimented with the idea of having teachers who avoid hurtful sarcasm and ridicule when they interact with the students. Do students have the freedom to venture out, to explore ideas without worrying about "being made fun of"? The idea here concerned emotional safety.

One mother said something like; “When I drop my children off at school in the morning I want to know that nothing bad is going to happen to them during the day.” I believe every head in the room, including mine, nodded to affirm that universal statement. Is the school a place where kids are safe from being physically hurt?

None of the above is surprising or new, is it? Wanting to be safe and to keep one’s progeny safe is universal, right? In a perfect world, “right” would be right. But it is not a perfect world. Sometimes if it means paying the electric bill or taking the child to the dentist, the electric bill wins out. Sometimes the child of some parent comes to school and bullies or taunts or has a fistfight with the children of some other parent. Sometimes the teacher overlooks a hurting child. Sometimes a child who went to school well goes home sick, sneezing or coughing or running a temperature. It is not a perfect world and public school is just that, public, and problems are going to occur in everyone’s world at some time.

So said, the one purpose becomes to plan for a “safe learning environment”, to gather resources necessary to implement the plan, to determine responsibilities of those charged with implementing the plan, to implement that plan, to measure the effectiveness of the outcomes of having implemented the plan, to modify and adjust the plan and so forth.

I hear a few of you saying, “Yadda, yadda, yadda”. “Too much talk, too little action.” “Cut out the organic fertilizer and get busy.” Ten years ago, maybe five, I would have probably agreed. But some book I read had a statement that said something like, “For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it....”.

(To be continued....)