

Chalkboard

By

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This is the fourth article in a series dealing with staff roles, mission statements, and core beliefs. The school board's core beliefs, to date, can be summarized in four statements. **“Opportunities must be provided for all teachers and all students to excel by maximizing their respective abilities. All stakeholders are responsible for student success. All student success must be objectively and quantifiably measured. A safe and healthy learning environment is conducive to learning.”** As I noted last week, in exploring the topic, *“A safe and healthy learning environment is conducive to learning”*, the statements are not listed in priority order and are being written about in no particular order.

“All stakeholders are responsible for student success” will be the focus this week. I will begin by saying the school board and administration had some trouble with the original wording of this statement. Originally, it was worded to state, *“All stakeholders must be held accountable for student success.”* It was revised because no one could come up with a reasonable plan on how to hold the stakeholders accountable or how to determine even if they were being accountable. As the person going the wrong way in the Primary School driveway is reported to have angrily said to a teacher, *“What’s the school board going to do? Give me a ticket?”*

An explanation of today's concept demands first that the word “stakeholder” be identified. Merriam-Webster's online dictionary at <http://www.m-w.com/dictionary/stakeholder> does not offer much advice in providing the meaning- “one that has a stake in an enterprise”. That definition might also give rise to thoughts of Boris Karloff movies.

Looking up the word “stake” at the same site yields six definitions of which 3C matches our discussion needs- “an interest or share in an undertaking or enterprise”. For our purposes then, a *stakeholder* would be *any person who holds an interest in the education of the students of the Gentry Public School District*. Taking that meaning back to the topic, “All stakeholders are responsible for student success” could transpose it to say, “All people who are interested in the education of Gentry students are responsible for those student's success.”

So then, who are the stakeholders of the Gentry Public School District? Who is interested in our students' success?

I think that list would include all of the school staff, the school board, the students, the students' parents and other family members, the business community, the religious community, *Main Street Gentry*, all departments of city government, all patrons of the district, the Arkansas Department of Education, the Arkansas State School Board, various other state agencies, various institutions of higher learning, the state legislature, the United States Department of Education, and the United States Congress.

Sure, you are thinking I am getting a little far-fetched with my list. But am I? The Gentry School Board did not write the *No Child Left Behind* legislation. They did not compose the hundreds of state laws that govern Arkansas public education. The Gentry board did not require Body Mass Index reports of students to parents. Get the idea?

Anyone who can regulate what happens within our classrooms is a stakeholder and should be responsible for student success. Anyone who expects to hire a Gentry graduate should be responsible for student success. Anyone concerned about the soul of a Gentry student should be responsible for student success. Anyone who wants to sell something to a Gentry student should be responsible for student success. Anyone who lives next door to a Gentry student should be responsible for student success. Anyone who gives birth to a Gentry student should be responsible for student success.

Anyone who drives a bus that transports a student, who prepares a meal for the student to eat in the lunchroom, who waxes the halls where students walk, who maintains their records, who takes their temperature, who writes the checks that buy their books, or who seeks to teach them should be responsible for student success. Whoever first said that it takes the entire village to raise a child was, in my opinion, on target.

Is any stakeholder more important than another? With regard to the educational process, the answer is a qualified "no". Does any stakeholder have a greater impact on the life of a child and his or her opportunity to achieve success? The answer is "certainly".

If I were to devise a scale to show the relationship between success of a student and the student's interaction with any particular stakeholder, one measuring stick might well be the unit of time spent with the student. On that scale, it should be the parent of the student, before any other stakeholder, who rates highest on having an impact on the child's success. I will venture that the next stakeholder in line will be the child's classroom teacher(s).

Article 14 of the Constitution of the State of Arkansas mandates that, "Intelligence and virtue being the safeguards of liberty and the bulwark of a

free and good government, the State shall ever maintain a general, suitable and efficient system of free public schools and shall adopt all suitable means to secure to the people the advantages and opportunities of education.” That only means that the student should have the opportunity to achieve success in his or her education. Whether that student actually experiences success is up to the stakeholders.

Are you a stakeholder? If so, I cordially invite you to the “Annual Report To The Public” which will be given at 6:00 p.m. on Monday night, October 9, 2006, at the new Primary School cafeteria.