

# Professional Learning Evening

30 November 2020 19:00

Hi Everyone, I'm going to talk about staying connected with staff. I'm hopeful that the things that are shared here this evening will be useful. If one of these tips are useful to you then it'll be worthwhile.

So I won't be talking about Covid or all of the issues we are all experiencing but merely looking at a few simple ways in how we stay connected in our school.

## 1. School Context: - All schools are unique in their own context

- I am based in Tyndall College - Carlow
- Tyndall College is new school we are four years old.
- Under the Patronage of Kilkenny & Carlow ETB
- We arose out of the separation of Carlow Vocational School and Carlow Institute of Further Education & Training.
- In August 2019 we moved to our new PPP Building. It's been a long journey. We were operating for 2 years in a building not fit for purpose.
- We were one of the PPP schools who suffered due to the collapse of Carillion and Salmon Builders.
- We are a DEIS School
- Our numbers have grown from 236 students in 2017-18 to 660 students in 2020-21
- Staff Allocation has grown from 23.5 WTE to 60 WTE in that space of time
  - So we are a growing, developing school with capacity for 1000 pupils
  - E.G this year we had a total of 16 new teaching staff appointed as well as 4 SNA's

JUST TO EMPHASISE THAT ALL THINGS REFERENCED ARE FROM MY PERSPECTIVE HERE AND WHAT WE ARE DOING TO STAY CONNECTED

## 2. Staying Connected -

- Key point here I would stress is the relationship of Principal and Deputy Principal or Deputy Principals
  - This has always been important
    - But I am conscious that the relationship might not always be strong or that may be new
  - Never before has it been so important
  - The morning check in and frequent daily meetings
  - The connection and understanding of roles and responsibilities
  - Staying on the same page
  - Having professional discussion
    - Being comfortable enough to disagree with each other when need be
    - We do this in private but we are united
  - Sticking to schedules and having planning time

- Your own planning time is so important
- Here we have a one hour weekly slot and we try and stick to it rigidly
- Supporting each other – so important in the current climate
  - It all stems from here.
  - Your interactions, body language and work ethic
    - Your teaching staff will feed off this.

### 3. Staying Connected Middle Management –

- One thing that has helped us is the development and evolution of our Middle Management Team
  - I completely understand that context is key here too but what we have done is
    - A Weekly Meeting attended by both AP 1's and AP 2's
    - We currently have 5AP1's, 6AP2's and a PC
      - We will soon have 7AP1's and 8AP2's as appointments are due to happen
    - No separation or segregation here in terms of importance at the meeting
      - Yes on the ground AP 1's have 4 hours alleviation time as per union guidelines
        - ◆ But this move has been very popular amongst our staff. Why?
  - It further enhances the attachment with the rest of the staff
  - Minutes of all meetings go to staff
  - Open process in terms of information provided and decision making
  - "The Us vs Them" model dissipates
    - CSL provide training to schools on this
    - PDST School Support – mentioned by Bernard
    - ETB Support – KCETB – currently
    - Don't underestimate how powerful this is especially for AP 2's
  - AP's appointed as Acting Principal and Deputy when Principal and Deputy are at meetings or off site. This opportunity is given to both 1's and 2's

### 4. Staff Shared Learning Day

- The evolution of our middle management has lent itself to a staff shared learning day which takes place very soon.
  - This is our 2nd year doing this.
  - At this school staff are presenting to their own staff on:
    - Student Voice
    - Effective Feedback
    - Active Teaching Methodologies – Magenta
    - DEIS
    - One Good Adult Programme
    - Behaviour For Learning
  - Presentations by staff followed by breakout sessions and open discussion

- It requires careful planning
- This is being led by our Assistant Principals but involves staff who do not have AP's presenting
  - Why?
    - It keeps us connected.
    - It allows professional discussion
    - It enhances collegiality
    - Builds leadership capacity
    - Removes "silo" mentality - (The notion that this has nothing to do with me)
    - Breaking down barriers
- This year we will be recording the presentations
- A 2nd day is planned for the new year
  - We often look to get outside expertise in to present to our teachers
    - There's nothing wrong with that
  - But how often do we look at the expertise in our own staffrooms?
    - There's great knowledge in there.
    - It just needs to be nurtured
- The AP's in our school have developed a great model here.
  - As a SMT the DP and I just facilitated it and let it grow
  - You just need to keep tabs on it and let them at it.
  - Brilliant for keeping connected

#### 5. As Leaders - Our Own Wellbeing -

- A simple tip -
  - Every Friday I select 5-6 students, usually one from each year group.
    - I contact their parent and tell the parent something positive about the child
    - Why?
      - The parent appreciates it
      - The child doesn't know its coming and it's positive
        - ◆ It makes me feel better about myself
        - ◆ It costs me a phonecall
          - ◇ It keeps me out and about and focused on the really important things mid week. Our students
- I have started this process with staff members with a non-generic text on a Friday.
  - I need to emphasise non generic!
    - Staff are used to emails and general texts from VS Ware or whatever platform you use.
  - It's important those little things are key
    - I've started with our most established staff members
    - If people work hard they need to hear it!
    - Again, remembering that part of the reason I do this is for my own wellbeing.

#### Open Door Policy

- All schools say we have an open door policy and principals say they have an open door to staff and

students.

- My office has fire doors so it swings open and closed.
- So when I'm in the office I have a wooden wedge that keeps the door open.
  - Therefore the door is always open unless I actually have a meeting
    - It's a small thing again but we often say as Principals and Deputies that we have an Open Door Policy
      - If your door is physically open while you're in your office - you are living it and it makes a difference
      - People are less reluctant to come in to you in these busy times.

#### 6. To Finish- Simple Connectivity

- A Final Simple connectivity tip - its not new and many of you are probably already doing it.
  - We can get bogged down in paperwork and the mornings are especially busy
  - Our doors open at 8.15am to allow students in and we start at 8.45am
  - Every morning I follow this simple process.
  - I stand at the main entrance of the school during this time from 8.15 to 8.45
  - By doing this you get a great sense for the day and it's a great way to stay connected not only with staff but the whole community.
  - So if you do this for 25-30 minutes everyday
    - If you say good morning to everyone you meet you are staying connected
    - If you're consistent about it, it'll work and it'll make a difference
    - A smile and a hello costs nothing
      - It's easy to get bogged down on the paperwork and the negative stuff
        - ◆ Very often the simplest thing is in front of us.

If anyone would like to contact me directly there is absolutely no problem at all. The best way to get me is on email at [gerry.mcgill@kilkennycarlwetb.ie](mailto:gerry.mcgill@kilkennycarlwetb.ie)

My mobile numbers are 0871146087 (work) and 0873768797 (private)

- Just to note the mobile reception is awful here but wifi is good so feel free to send me a WhatsApp

The landline here is 0599182250.

I'm happy to help out with any queries and further detail. Above are just my notes so they may not make absolute sense!