

Be Greater than the Average

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Dear Member of the Monticello Community,

Most recently, I was asked “what makes a student a good learner?” The question immediately made me think of our best students. I went to traditional answers first:

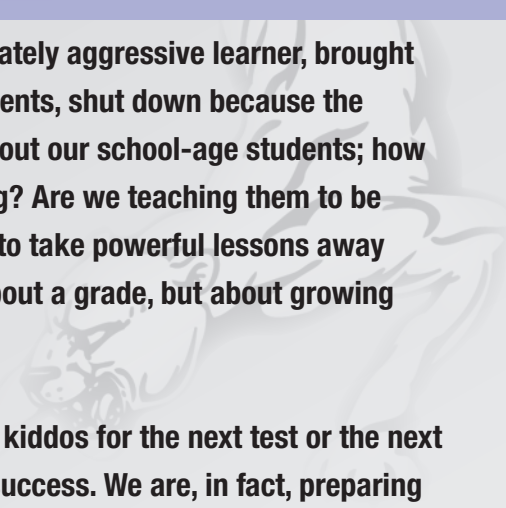
- Good learners focus.
- Good learners listen carefully.
- Good learners complete the work presented to them.
- Good learners seek to meet the expectations placed before them; some even go above and beyond.

After this short string of traditional answers crossed my mind, I realized that my entire list centered around compliance, and compliance had not led to my most enriching learning experiences. I decided then to consider times when I had been a less engaged learner. After all, our truest level of understanding stems from our own personal experiences.

I remember attending a meeting where the presenter simply talked TO me, rather than engaging me in the learning, and I felt uninspired. I crossed my arms and thought about the hundreds of things on my to do list. Recalling that meeting, I realized that I had closed myself off from learning. Yet I also knew that there were other similar meetings when I had exited newly inspired and filled with energy. I pondered what made this meeting different. What had caused me to shut out learning when this behavior was not typical for me? What had caused me to walk away uninspired?

The answer? Me.

I, at that moment, had become passive aggressive – a disengaged learner. I made a decision not to learn because I did not find the message and method of delivery favorable. Passionately aggressive learners would have said that, despite the method of delivery, “we choose learning.” These individuals would have wrangled the information to heighten their level of knowledge, whether they wanted to hear it or not, and used it to progress forward. It is indeed true that some of the best lessons come from some of the most difficult experiences.



This simple realization, that we CHOOSE to be a passively or passionately aggressive learner, brought me back to our students. How many times have we, as life-long students, shut down because the method of delivery and the message were not to our liking? What about our school-age students; how many times had they passively aggressively shut down their learning? Are we teaching them to be passionately aggressive about learning? Are we showing them how to take powerful lessons away from every experience? Are we teaching them that learning is not about a grade, but about growing each and every day?

If we are not, we certainly need to. After all, we are not prepping our kiddos for the next test or the next grade level, although success in these are key indicators for future success. We are, in fact, preparing them for life, and life is full of experiences, both positive and negative, that are ripe with lessons to be learned.

In order to help us build passionately aggressive learners who are prepared to grow in any situation, and to help each of us grow as professionals who improve ourselves and the world around us, consider the following question and habit:

ESSENTIAL QUESTION FOR DECEMBER AND JANUARY:

Do you expect someone to feed you information in a desirable format in order to learn, or do you intend to be a passionate learner each and every day, in every situation, by wrangling information to maximize learning and using it to proceed forward?

ESSENTIAL HABIT FOR DECEMBER AND JANUARY:

Choose to be a passionately aggressive learner.

Wishing you all a wonderful holiday season and new year full of joy and peace.

Be Well,

Tammy Mangus
Superintendent of Schools