

## MODEL SCHOOLS, MONTI INSIGHTS: A MONTHLY REFLECTION FROM MONTICELLO EDUCATORS.

*Each year, a team of Monticello staff members attends the Model Schools Conference, where they are immersed in opportunities to learn about innovative, out-of-the-box strategies that are transforming education and student success nationwide. This year, we asked each attendee from our district to bring some of that knowledge back to Monticello. Each month, the Navigator will feature a "spotlight" story highlighting new ways to engage our students and prepare them to be life-ready students. Our December spotlight is courtesy of MHS Guidance Counselor, Allyson Steinberg.*

One of the things that struck me the most at the Model Schools Conference was the enthusiasm. BOLD GOALS! BIG IDEAS! I had the unique pleasure of attending several breakout sessions covering everything from Dr. Bill Daggett's "Culture Trumps Strategy" to social media for professional learning to mini builders' sessions where conference participants can play with 3-D printers and new technology. While every session that I attended had exciting and innovative ideas, there were two particular sessions that have stuck with me and I'd really like to share with our district.

### South Heights Elementary

South Heights Elementary school is located in Henderson, Kentucky. Although it is hundreds of miles away from the Monticello Central School District, its students and their lives are strikingly similar to ours. According to the staff, they were a persistently low-performing school that was able to turn it around to become nationally recognized as a leader in education. The enthusiasm that the presenting staff conveyed was contagious. They were a team and they were there to see every student succeed (ESSA pun not intended). In fact, their school mantra is "We succeed. No exceptions. No excuses." The success of all students rests on **all** adults. The faculty and staff deeply care about the school and its students. In addition to their mantra, the school has also branded themselves as #THE1199, a tribute to their address, 1199 Madison Street. It is used everywhere from twitter to school communication. The principal of the building, Mr. Rob Carroll actually has the brand tattooed on his ankle (no pressure, principals! 😊). Together they have worked to build a school where caring is king and students achieve. From the Principal to the faculty to the support staff, every member of the building invests in its students, banding together to ensure everyone's success. They emphasized that it's not about the job title, it's what you're passionate about. South Heights Elementary is passionate about its school and its students.



December 2016, Allyson Steinberg



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One of South Heights biggest ideas was going to a student's comfort zone. Instead of being called to an office or to a teacher's desk, the teacher/administrator/staff would find where the student was most comfortable and talk to them there. It might be in the hallway, it might be at home, and it might be sitting on a bean bag in the library. The point is that the faculty and staff is stepping out of their comfort zone so the students can be in theirs. Through this and countless other efforts, they have seen an enormous success rate. The students are loved and they feel loved. The school is loved. It is universally understood that there is something going on in others' lives that



they may not know anything about and therefore **EVERYONE** is met with kindness. You can really feel the sense of family and pride from the few staff that I was able to meet.

One last exciting thing that I must share about this special school: t-shirts. They are not any old t-shirts, they're personalized t-shirts. Staff were given school branded shirts with their last names on the back and a big number indicating the year they were hired. Everyone was so proud to be representing their school and the year they were hired. It unified the staff when they wore them and gave everyone who saw the staff wearing a shirt a small piece of information about themselves at the same time. Brilliant.

More information about South Heights Elementary School can be found at:

<http://southheights.henderson.kyschools.us/>

(Principal Carroll was kind enough to send me a shot of his shirt)

### ACDC Leadership



Jacob Clifford is excited. He is enthusiastic. And he believes in a hands on, student-focused philosophy. An economics and AP teacher from California, Mr. Clifford travels all over the country inspiring teachers and students. He's the wacky teacher that comes to school in costume for a supply and demand lesson.

"ACDC is an acronym for hands-on, student-focused, teaching philosophy. We believe effective education requires Active learning, Cooperative learning, Discovery learning, and Community."

Mr. Clifford created ACDC Leadership as a way to get students to "buy in" to the learning for his classes. What makes a class special? By working together, Clifford creates a community within his classes that bonds them together to work toward learning. He does something in every class to make them want to show up. Clifford takes BOLD measures to ensure learning is fun. He states that

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you have to consider what you want your students to walk away with. The culture in his classroom is the key. He'll take a lesson in economics and create a small competitive environment between two sides of the class. Students are having a good time, while learning the law of supply and demand. After an activity, Mr. Clifford is always sure to debrief the class-what was the lesson? What was learned? Was it fun?

Mr. Clifford has also made his curriculum manageable. He's got an entire website and YouTube channel devoted to all lessons in Economics. By creating short, FUN, and creative videos, Mr. Clifford has allowed himself to become accessible 24/7. While I know this is being done attempted across our district, I loved the idea that students can have "on-call" tutorials. With our students being so enmeshed with technology, this is a way to work with it, not against it.



What I admired most about Jacob Clifford was his **boldness**; his willingness to push boundaries and make learning unconventional and exciting. I felt envious of the students in his class because it must be very inspiring to have a teacher like Mr. Clifford. I'm willing to bet that because Mr. Clifford takes extra steps and is invested in his classes and his students that the things they learn will stay with them for a long time. And really, isn't that what we're all really trying to do?

More information about ACDC Leadership and Jacob Clifford can be found at:

[www.acdcleadership.com](http://www.acdcleadership.com)

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Answer Garden is a great online tool for crowd sourcing answers! Perfect for real time brainstorming and sharing out ideas.

<https://answergarden.ch/>