

The Monti Navigator

Be Greater than the Average



Tammy Mangus, Superintendent of Schools

November, 2016

Leaders as Coaches, Leaders as Players

Hello Monticello:

In case you haven't heard, the Cubs won the World Series for the first time in 108 years. Although I've only been an on-again, off-again baseball fan for the majority of my life (and a White Sox fan when I am in "on again" mode) I was mesmerized by this series. I rooted for the Cubs (for all baseball fans out there who know about the Windy City rivalry, I know this sounds bizarre -- but I have always been intrigued by the underdog) and found myself completely incapable of looking away from the historical momentousness of this particular series. I was completely struck by the complexities of the game and the quiet, strategic intentionality of the coaches. My rapt attention to the games themselves, combined with all of the news articles, documentaries and blogs focusing on this series, left me with some key lessons that are incredibly relevant as we close out our focus on leadership. 108 years in the making, here they are:

1. Set lofty goals for your team, and never, ever steer clear of them.

Although they were cursed to never win again by a goat-toting fan back in the 1940's, the team and its leaders held each other to a standard of relentless loyalty to the belief that they were capable of winning. And they TRULY did believe in their team. When legendary player and manager Phil Cavarretta made commentary on the team's likelihood to lose, the team immediately fired him. There was no room on the Cubs for doubters. Indeed, this is a very powerful lesson: to achieve, we must believe.

2. You've got to be flexible to really play the game and reach a positive result, but flexibility does not mean that one is emotionally reactive. Instead, each and every player must be intentionally reactive. All action centers on practicing goal-getting and long-term thinking. Unintentional reactivity is a problem.

When energies are focused on short-term crisis aversion, an organization cannot and will not grow. Instead, great coaches, great leaders and great organizations decide where they are headed and are EXTREMELY flexible and adaptable so that instead of only one pathway to success, there are hundreds. As a result of this practice, crisis aversion is part of the pathway to success, failure is not fatal and everyone on the team reacts to problems blocking the team's ability to reach its goal with an eye on the prize. Every player and their actions matter-- if one stumbles, the others zero in to take corrective action.

3. Be passionate -- but more importantly, be a passionate leader who is cool, calculating and methodical, knowing that it is the players that REALLY matter.

Although folks have questioned the supposed "over-management" of the Cubs coach, Joe Maddon, one doesn't have to look too far to see the fruits of his leadership style. In the clutches of the rain delay late in game seven, the Cubs met in a "players only" meeting. The players have commented that these talks helped them to gear up for the big win in those important final moments. Maddon's response was priceless: "Like I told you, I hate meetings. I'm not a meetings guy. I love when players have meetings; I hate when I do."

All of us spend some fraction of our personal and professional lives as players and as coaches. Here in the educational realm, I am a player for the community and a coach to the amazing administrators and teachers here

in the district. Our teachers and administrators, who are the players on my team, coach our kiddos to greatness each and every day.

Let's all remember to recognize who we are in each of our roles – when we are players, let's play the game to the best of our abilities. When we step into our coaching roles, let's coach with the three ideals listed above in mind. If we do, there is no doubt that together we can win at preparing our students for a brighter tomorrow!

Be Well,
Tammy Mangus

