

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 January spotlight is courtesy of third grade Special Education Teacher KellyAnn Olsen.

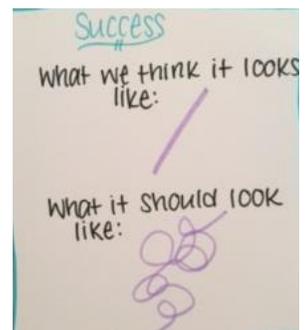
Welcome back everyone! I hope you all had a wonderful and healthy holiday break. As we have spent the last two months with our families and classrooms discussing being thankful and appreciative for our blessings, let us be grateful for the opportunities we have to teach for the BOLD Monticello School District.

As a first-year teacher, I was flooded with ideas from the Model Schools Conference and the 108 breakout sessions it had to offer. I was exposed to the wonderful insights of fellow teachers from all around the country, as well as the amazing speakers that were present. Through these interactions, I was able to fully emerge in to my three main goals for the time spent; how to better the culture, engagement of the students and overall environment of the classroom.

Culture

- "Change is **constant**." Keynote speaker Eric Sheninger says, teachers sometimes set a comfort zone for themselves and their classrooms, and once it is set they are afraid to step out of it. When you decide to take that step out of your comfort zone and step towards a BOLD movement, you should be prepared to be lonely at first, but know that others will follow.
- "FAIL."
 - o First
 - o Attempt
 - o In
 - o Learning
- Eric describes the idea of success as a spiraling continuum; it happens over time and with failed attempts at your own learning. "If we play it safe, you'll never see the disruption that can cause change." As educators, we have a responsibility to awe our students and instill the idea of wonder within them. Becoming an innovative leader and teacher means you should make disruptions to your norm to see what could really become of your future leaders. We must personalize learning and integrate bold ideas so that the culture of the classroom remains an inviting and captivating one.

Here is an image that demonstrates what success should look like over time:



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- Another wonderful speaker who we had the pleasure of meeting with personally was Ray McNulty. He mentioned that **“Content is no longer KING. CARING is KING.”** As teachers, we need to talk to the kids; if they feel like they’re adding value, they’ll feel more comfortable with us. He also mentioned “We have driven the emotional learning out of learning; BRING IT BACK!” We need to teach the kids to appreciate everyone 😊

Captivating and Engaging the Students

- During my pre-conference on “Everyone Writes” I was truly focused on the daily struggles that writing presents to the students and how to make this time more engaging for them. Sherry St. Clair was the amazing speaker for this four-hour session.
 - The National Writing Project states that 75% of writing should be done in the *pre-writing* phase. We are not giving them enough time to fully emerge their ideas on paper but are too concentrated on the final product of the published piece.
 - How often do you share *your* writing with the class? This was a question that really caught my attention because it is a valuable activity that the kids would benefit from. She gave an amazing example of writing a letter to introduce yourself in the beginning of the year and ask for one back from each of them. Even writing in your own writing notebook during their writing time will instill the idea that writing is a fun time of the day and it is important to everyone!
- Another speaker that was the epitome of engaging and captivating was Jacob Clifford.
 - Jacob mentioned the ACDC Leadership model:
 - Active Learning, Cooperative Learning, Discovery Learning and Community. If the students feel part of a community, they will want to return to school each day and continue to be a part of the learning process.
 - Allow collaboration amongst students in answering a question compared to one student. TEAMWORK!

Environment

One of the ideas that I took away from Ray McNulty was to allow the students to take a part in their environment: give them a survey. I strongly suggest that we use surveys amongst the students to truly get an idea as to what THEY want and what THEY are looking for, and not just what the teachers THINK they would like. This was a real revelation for my co-teacher and I, and was fun for the kids too!

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- With the idea of “flexible seating” on the rise, Model Schools had multiple companies present with their innovative and advanced tables for the classrooms. In these presentations, they mentioned that “classroom design can increase *or* decrease the learning by 25% (light, colors, spacing, etc). Let us use these BOLD ideas to allow our students more flexibility in how they accomplish their work!
- In the session, “Breaking Free from Rows of Desks” both Megan Bennett and Dr. Erika Tate touched upon the importance of the classroom structure impacting the rigorous and relevant engagement in learning. They mentioned the diverse way you could set up the classroom to allow for “Learning Landscapes” which would include space for:
 - o Individual work
 - o Whole group
 - o Small group
 - o Pairs
 - o Coffee-shop: students working next to one another but not together

Some Helpful Links

In closing, here are a list of helpful links / book titles to access the BOLD knowledge from these presenters and more:

- <http://writingfix.com/>
- <http://achievethecore.org/>
- www.acdcleadership.com
- “*Moving Beyond Quadrant A*” by Bernadette Lambert