



March 3, 2017

Ideas Learned from AASA

This week I attended the AASA National Conference on Education. I thought I would share some of my thoughts from the first day.

- In a session on teacher evaluation the presenter offered the following advice for evaluators:
 - When observing classrooms look at what the students are learning. Ask students what they are learning. Determine if students can follow the tasks required of the teacher.
 - Students have to do the majority of the talking in the classroom, not the teacher.
 - Teacher performance is the single greatest factor for improving student performance.
 - Have administrators go into classrooms together to develop a common language and to talk about what they are observing.
 - Claim is a generalization of a teacher's teaching.
 - Evidence is what the evaluator sees that leads to the conclusion.
 - Focus on the teacher competencies that your district thinks is important and is backed by research. For example, I have been advocating that evaluators concentrate on Domain 3 in the Danielson Frameworks and 3c, engaging students in their own learning as the most important component.
- Jamie Vollmer was the first general session keynote speaker. His three main points were the following:
 - There is a battle against public education. Vollmer called it "Combatting Viral Negativity." School leaders need to lead a campaign in their own communities to negate the public education detractors and allow educators to communicate the message about what schools are achieving.
 - Many school leaders are "Creating 21st Century Schools" and this change in practice is often difficult for parents and others to understand and support. Many groups including business leaders, parents, and others think that all school accountability is measured by test scores. Today's school leaders need to focus on developing 21st century skills for all students.
 - Vollmer advocating that school leaders contest government regulations that do not support the goals of your community.
- Illinois Superintendent Dr. Dave Schuler and the staff of District 214 presented on the topic of Redefining Ready: Transforming Learning in a 1:1 District; District 214. District

214 is doing some tremendous work in changing the way that high schools work. The following are some aspects of their work that I find transforming:

- The district supports teachers who start innovative programming. The districts support these initiatives and call them “pilots.”
- As the district commences in remodeling, the classroom furniture is changed to support renovation. For example classroom walls are being repainted in dry erase paint so that all surfaces become learning places.
- The district supports demonstration labs for teachers to work on their own trade. These labs are located in schools to encourage other teachers to visit and watch other teachers try innovative teaching techniques.
- Institute days are teacher led with teachers teaching teachers.
- District 214 has started a program to grow their own teachers from their community. The process starts by encouraging students to become teachers. Those students who agree to this path are signed to a “scholarship” program that is promoted similar to the programs athletes conduct when signing with a university for an athletic scholarship. The district provides college level courses at high school level. They guarantee the students a student teaching in District 214 schools. The District provides wrap around services for the students, and basically offer the graduates jobs in the schools.

Work – Life Balance

Dr. Lynn Gibson, Superintendent of Hononegah Community 207; Dr. Kim Suedbeck, Assistant Superintendent of Hononegah Community 207; and Dr. Terri Vandewiele, Superintendent of Silvis 34 developed an administrative academy for IASA titled “*Moving from Vision to Action: Learn How to Become an Essentialist.*” These developers authorized me to also present the academy and I have developed the academy with my own presenter style. This includes a concentration on personal as well as work goals.

As the participants in my academy concentrate on personal goals I have discovered that school administrators have a difficult time really personalizing their goals. Many participants want to connect personal goals to work goals. My emphasis is for the participant to focus on self. This is often hard to do because we often are working on serving others, especially the students in our school districts.

I use a metaphor of juggling five balls in life. One ball, the work ball is rubber and bounces back if dropped. The other four balls are glass balls that shatter when dropped. These four balls are family, faith, self and friends. Too often we think the work ball will shatter if dropped and we sacrifice our values and focus on the other four balls.

A goal of this academy is to have each individual establish a minimum of three goals that the individual will try to fulfill over the next 12 months. Goals can be work or life focused. It is up to the individual. I ask the participants to input the three goals into their smart phone and put a calendar notification on the goals at a regular interval so they can evaluate their progress toward their goals.

Later as I run into past participants they will often reflect to me where they are concerning their own personal goals. More often than not they refer to their personal goals not their work goals, For example, one participant told me how they have lost over 30 pounds as they work on their personal goal to eat healthy and exercise. Another referred to a weekly date night he has established with his spouse. A third related to me how she has established a personal devotion time to her daily schedule. A fourth wrote me a personal email thanking me for motivating her to get up at 4 am each morning to work out.

If you are interested in taking this academy or hosting this academy please contact me at rvoltz@iasaedu.org. For the past 10 years I have provided a variety of academies and workshops for school administrators. This is the academy that I think returns the most benefit for the participants.

Tip of the Week

Last week I wrote about using a smart watch as part of your exercise program. My daughter, Jennifer, has an Apple Watch and as you read last week so do I. A function of the watch is that you can “follow” each other in your exercise. Jennifer is a serious runner and in her first marathon qualified for the Boston Marathon. Each day when she completes a run I receive a message on my app what she has accomplished. Of course, she also receives a message when I complete a run. While I am not presently training for a marathon I still run every day. My mileage is not close to Jennifer’s but we keep each other motivated by seeing what the other has accomplished that day. I recommend that you develop some kind of process with a friend, relative, or colleague to keep you motivated toward your exercise goal.