Board Report for Kodiak Middle School

Monday, April 24, 2017
The Growth of Kodiak Middle School

I mentioned last month some of the amazing successes of Kodiak Middle School over the last three years. This month, I would like to share some data to explain some of the great things that have happened.

Foundations Data

Despite our best efforts for our students, sometimes kids don’t get everything they need in elementary school, and they come to us with holes or gaps in their learning. Some kids need some additional time just to be successful. What has been amazing about our students’
success over the last three years is that we have found ways to individualize our school to support what students need in many different areas. From coteaching, to extra time, to tutorials, to foundations classes, to special education, we give the kids what they need when they need it.

We will have more year-end data for this year in the next board report, but I would like to highlight a few success stories here.

First, one of our foundations classes existed solely to give kids extra time on math. As you remember, the 8th graders attending this class were all on grade-level by the end of the year.

Second, our English Language Learners use a program called Imagine Learning. This is a fantastic program that helps our students learn what they need to learn. All of the districts that I have worked in use this program, and when used effectively, students grow dramatically in their ability to comprehend and speak the English Language. Kodiak Middle School was designated as a Top 10% school by Imagine Learning.

**Tutorials**

Our tutorial opportunities continue to play an important role in helping our students be successful. this year, our math teacher used pre-assessment data to see that more than half (64 of 123) of her students were not not prepared for the Pythagorus! So, she used a tutorial to target the right kids who were struggling so that in the post assessment, only 15 of the 123 were not proficient enough to move along. Those 15 still had an opportunity for more exposure to the concepts, also through the tutorials.

**Data Wall**

Three years ago, we didn’t spend much time looking at the data for our students. We now have a wall of data that we update regularly to make sure that we can see how students are progressing. It is housed in our Collaboration Space and is an opportunity for teachers to examine their own students’ performance and that of other grades. I’ll share this year’s data next month, but I’d like to highlight the progress we made last year! The data below is what we saw on our data wall for the 2015-2016 school year!
At Kodiak Middle School, there is real power in looking at the data as the year goes on and seeing student scores reflect the growth that we know students are making.

You can see in these scores the percentage of students “in the green” growing each time the students are assessed.

Our teachers and students work hard to make sure our students are successful. I’d like to compare these scores to 2013-2014 to show the impressive growth we experienced last year, and what we hope to continue to experience.
As you look at these scores from the past, you can really see that our emphasis on standards and achievement are really valuable. It’s exciting to see our kids develop the academic skills to make them successful.
It’s not just about tests!

Ask any teacher and they will say that we “test too much.” But ask in a different way, and you will get a different answer. We care deeply about knowing if our kids understand what they need to. So, we make efforts to improve their academic skills, Middle School is a time for exploration, discovery, and tremendous change for our students. That is why we have made a concerted effort to focus on different things that our students need that can’t be measured with a test.

We do need some sort of valid and reliable data set to say that we have been effective. We also use the AdvancED continuous improvement process that the district has adopted to ensure that we are adapting to the needs of our students.

We have taken the School Climate and Connectedness Survey (SCCS) in KIBSD for many years, and the data has been instructive for us.

In 2014, we reviewed the data from the SCCS and saw that the student perception of “Caring Adults” was a significantly declining area, as shown in the attached graph (dark blue to medium blue) and, as a staff, we knew that something needed to change. So we made efforts to support our students and teachers in communicating that at Kodiak Middle School, there
are many caring adults. We can believe that all we want, but until the kids state that, it isn’t real. Well, as you can see by the 2015 data about caring adults, we made some improvements, and with the addition of home visits, trauma-informed strategies, social-emotional learning, flexible seating, standing in the hallways during passing period, using student-first language, leaving notes on lockers for the first day of school and Valentine’s day, and many more individual, herculean efforts by our staff and teachers, the data continued to improve.

After the results are returned, our staff and teachers engage in a process to take action based on the data. Faculty and staff work together, because it is so important, to make sure that we are responsive to the data.

At the review of the 2015 data, we as a staff decided to focus on the school rules that would be rewritten from negatively-phrased to positive, simple, memorizable statements: “Be Safe, Be Respectful, Be Responsible.” These school rules change the approach teachers and administration take to student discipline. These rules respect the students and their backgrounds. As faculty and staff, we created a belief statement regarding student behavior:

“We don’t want to just produce compliant students; we want students who understand the need/value in positive behavior, in school and beyond.”

One of the other great things that came out of these conversations is that each morning, our attendance secretary sends out an email with the name of every student that was absent the day before, encouraging teachers to notice the students who were absent, call them by name, and let them know they were missed. This is one of those Herculean efforts that yields fantastic results. We expect our student perceptions of Caring Adults to increase or remain steady again next year, as it has for the last three years.

Another area in the School Climate and Connectedness Survey that needed attention was staff perceptions about School Leadership. It was our lowest area in 2014, and, after reviewing the data that year, we implemented a Building Leadership Team in January of 2015 to give more teachers an opportunity to be involved in the processes of the school. As you can see in the graph below, staff perceptions about school leadership were the lowest in the
district at the middle school (2.87 in 2014). Through an effective distributed leadership practice, with effective communication strategies and opportunities for teachers to be part of the decision-making process, we saw a quick increase, and the latest School Climate and Connectedness Survey showed that staff perceptions of the following areas increased: Respectful Climate, School Safety, Student Involvement, School Leadership & Involvement.

Kodiak Middle
School is not perfect, but it has shown significant growth in the last three years. Our teachers and staff have faced the many changes with determination and eagerness to make Kodiak Middle School the best school in the state.

The data shared in this report is not the result of one or even a few people. This requires a collaborative, concerted effort to make our school better, and I couldn’t be more proud of the dedication of the teachers and staff at Kodiak Middle School. When given the opportunity, they gave their all to make sure that they did what was right for our students, always putting our kids’ success first.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jethro Jones