

Be Greater than the Average

Tammy Mangus, Superintendent of Schools



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Dear Member of the Monticello Community,

The court of public opinion is a difficult place to be. In fact, it is downright dangerous. You see, the expectation that is set for us by others impacts what we believe about ourselves and can become a self-fulfilling prophecy. The science world calls this The Pygmalion Effect. This theory, which states that the expectation of others directly impacts what we actually achieve, has been tested several times.

The most famous (and controversial) study occurred in 1968 and was conducted by two fellows named Rosenthal and Jacobson. These two gave all students in a California elementary school an IQ test at the beginning of the year. They did not disclose the actual scores of the students, but selected a random sample of students with varying IQ scores and told teachers that these students could be expected to grow faster than other students as a result of their testing outcomes. At the end of the year, students were retested. Students in the random sample group did, in fact, grow more than the other students showing that there is a correlation between expectation and outcome.

This theory is indeed important. You see, somehow, somewhere folks have gotten the idea that schools are the enemy. Negative talk about our school systems abound here and everywhere. You don't have to go very far in your research to find a news article that shows our school systems to be a wreck. Click on any social media page and see how long it takes you to find a negative comment about schools. Chat with a group of educators. How long does it take for the conversation to shift to something that has some level of negativity attached to it?

Certainly folks are entitled to their opinion, but there is just one problem...Our kids actually believe what we say. They behave based on the expectations we set. So, if we continuously paint our educational system poorly, our students react accordingly. They may walk the line, because we also tell them we expect them to behave, but they rarely respect and admire the education they receive.

Want to test this? Ask middle and high school students to rate the education they are receiving in one of the following categories:

- 1. It is a waste of time.**
- 2. It is okay. I think school is something I have to do, so I get through the day.**
- 3. It is good. I think school is something I have to do, so I try to learn something every day.**
- 4. It is excellent. We are lucky to receive an education in a system that offers so many opportunities.**

Did the vast majority decide on item four? If not, we have work to do in redefining our expectations for students and marketing how education can actually change our economic trajectory and success as a community! We already know that education equals opportunity; let's add to that...Our expectation of educational success will absolutely increase opportunities for our students.

Now, let's not get confused here and think that I am purporting that we should all become unquestioning followers who report that everything is sunshine and rainbows in the world of education. Instead, let's say that we believe in the power of education. Let's say that we expect the best for our students. Let's say that we will stop attacking schools and start teaming up to find solutions to the challenges that frustrate us. The court of public opinion is a difficult place to be. In fact, it is downright dangerous. Trust me, our words matter, and our kids are watching.

Essential Questions for February

What do you expect from the Monticello Central School District?

Be honest. Are your expectations high?

Essential Habit for February

Set high expectations for yourself and those around you to ensure that we shape a better reality.

Be well,

**Tammy Mangus
Superintendent of Schools**