

Be Greater than the Average

Tammy Mangus, Superintendent of Schools



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Dear member of the Monticello community,

Inspiration can be hard to find in the depths of January when you live in the Northeast. The rush and the pull of the holidays disappear in a flash, and we are left with the cloudy, dreary realization that it will be at least four months, a full 120 days, before we can count on clearer skies and toastier weather.

Indeed, the Northeast can be a difficult place to reside in these upcoming months. With approximately 200 cloudy days a year, most of them settling in between January and April, we clearly need to find a way to create our own sunshine. We don't accomplish this by waiting for inspiration from others. We don't accomplish this by pointing blame in any given direction. We don't accomplish this with band-aid driven actions that allow for temporary respite. We accomplish this by inspiring ourselves to take responsibility for the world around us in order to leverage REAL results.

Inspired folks elude negativity and attack challenges blocking their pathways to success with kindness, integrity and a laser-like focus on making things right. Make no mistake, this sort of thinking does not make life any easier – we are all well aware of energy required for combustion that yields light, but those determined will work to make their world a bit brighter and cast a light on these inspired folks as well.

To demonstrate the difference in the perspective offered by such inspiration, let's take a look at our current, recently released, four-year graduation rate. Certainly, a rate of 65 percent is unacceptable. Regarding this statistic, we can join one of two camps:

Camp One: Folks in this camp look back in order to blame. They entertain thoughts that the failure of these children rests with those who educated them throughout the years, who failed to give these students the skills needed to stick with it. They entertain the idea that alternate educational experiences were the right option since the kiddos clearly “didn't fit” in the regular program (band-aid fixes). They entertain the idea that some other entity is clearly responsible for the success of our students as listed in the graduation rate (inspiration from others – responsibility shifting).

Camp Two: Folks in this camp look every single failure in the eye, accept it as their own, and seek to improve. They act on the thought that EVERY educator matters in the success of each student, regardless of the current learning level of each student when the year begins. Instead, they embrace the baseline and seek powerful growth. They act on the thought that if we are to change the behaviors, actions and habits of our students, we must EDUCATE them instead of seeking an “alternative placement” that allows students to continue on with their unsuccessful ways in a different place. They act on the thought that intentional, nimble, success-based solutions will improve the success rates of our children.

Yes, these Northeast winters certainly can be dreary, but despite our zip code, the “camp two” address yields far more sunshine.

Cheers to all! In this New Year, may you all find yourselves in need of some shades.

For the sake of our students and our culture, please refocus on the following as we build an amazing 2015.....

Essential Questions for December and January

Do you expect someone to feed you information in a desirable format in order to learn, or do you intend to be a learner each and every day, in every situation, by wrangling information to maximize learning and using it to proceed forward?

Essential Habit for December and January

Be a passionately aggressive learner.

Be Well,

**Tammy Mangus
Superintendent of Schools**