

Tammy Mangus, Superintendent of Schools

Dear Member of the Monticello Community,

It is rough out there. If any of us were thinking that January and February seemed interminable, welcome to the brink: the month of March. Anyone who has been in education long enough knows that this month is clouded by heightened discipline referrals caused by downtrodden adults and students deprived of the reassuring feel of the warmth of the sun and chaotic events that blind side us on a weekly, if not daily, basis. Cabin fever is real folks, and with the painfully low wind chills, we have all been locked up for far too long. Spring break is the corner that turns us, but until we get there, we are surrounded by questions that taunt us away from serenity.....

- Will it ever stop snowing?
- -10 is the high again today. Seriously?
- How many days of school do we have left before the test?
- If we have a two-hour delay two times this week resulting in a loss of 4 hours of instruction out of a possible 26 hours, what pieces of learning do I leave out? Isn't it all important?
- Is the statement that if March comes in like a lion that it goes out like a lamb really true?

With all of these pressing questions, we must center ourselves and focus on simplicity. Our sun-depleted selves can tend to complicate, criticize, condemn and confuse. We Northeasterners didn't get pegged for our iron-will, tenacity and attitude by mistake, and although the perseverance we embody by residing here is what gets us through, for our own well-being, and the well-being of our kiddos, it is imperative, in these long, last days of winter, to zero in on the heart of what is important, focus all of our attention there and leave the rest of the questions and the chaos out in the snowbank.

Dr. Seuss, who was born in the month of March, was gifted at sharing simple lessons in fun ways. These smile-inflicting, powerful lessons help us find the heart of why we educate. If we can center ourselves, our actions and our lessons (be it math, science, music or rules at home) around these simple ideals, March might turn up to be far more tolerable for all of us.

Seuss's Simple Lessons

1. "Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better, it's not."
2. "The more that you read, the more things you will know. The more that you learn, the more places you'll go."
3. "You'll miss the best things if you keep your eyes shut."
4. "Sometimes the questions are complicated, and the answers are simple."
5. "Think left and think right and think low and think high. Oh, the things you can think up if only you try."
6. "If things start happening, don't worry, don't stew, just go right along, and you'll start happening too."
7. "It's better to know how to learn than to know."
8. "Everything stinks until it's finished."
9. "You're off to great places! Today is your day! Your mountain is waiting, so get on your way!"
10. "Now my troubles are going to have troubles with me!"

This month, seek to stay on target. Seek to continue to push towards high rigor and exceptional expectation, but center those ideals around a simple Seuss lesson or two. Not many are blessed with the ability to take the chaotic complications of the world and break it down into smile that has the ability to inspire and energize. This month let's practice doing just that.

Essential Question for March

What is my simple target?

Every step leads us closer to our destination. But if we don't identify that destination and remind ourselves of it while we are on our journey, we get caught up in each step.

Essential Habit for March

Start each day reminding yourself (and our kiddos) of the simple target....and for goodness sake, make that target smile-worthy!

If we discuss what that target looks like, it helps all of us grow together. For example, if our simple target is to realize that, "It's better to know how to learn than to know." We must discuss with our children what this means and ask them when this skill might come in handy. After a rich conversation about what the target means and why it is important, then we can move into our typical studies and apply the simple target to what we are currently doing. As you can see, developing the realization that, "It's better to know how to learn than to know." Is a handy, life-ready skill that will empower our learners both in the classroom (be it math, science, ELA or any course) and later in life!

Be well,

Tammy Mangus
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