INPEC

Session Title: Rule #3: Fuel Your Ride with Positive Energy

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Do you find your teachers participating in a game of Rock, Paper, Scissor? What about the Pillowcase Activity, Lost and Found Giveaway, Golf Cart Challenge, What's My Number, lunch that begins with "C", or the October favorite of a Pumpkin Contest? Come and experience the why and how of teacher engagement at the INPEC 2021 Convention in Indianapolis. Participants will learn specific examples to use throughout the school year to bring faculty and staff closer and more fully living the mission of their school.

Defining Engagement

Teacher engagement is not equivalent to teacher satisfaction. Teacher satisfaction only indicates how happy or content your teacher is at the school. It does not address their level of motivation, involvement, or emotional commitment to Catholic schools. Teacher engagement is the extent to which teachers feel passionate about their ministry, are committed to the Church, and put discretionary effort into their classrooms and school. How engaged are teachers in your school?

Engagement Matters

Margaret Wheatley (1999) recognized that in organizations, real power and energy is generated through relationships. The patterns of relationships and the capacities to form them are more important than tasks, functions, roles, and positions. We know Catholic schools are about forming our students in the faith while educating them, yet this cannot be maximized without creating the conditions that enable teachers and staff to work collaboratively. Group cohesiveness is positively related to performance. Empirical studies found a moderate positive relationship between cohesiveness and performance (Cohen and Bailey, 1997). My experiences in Catholic schools have taught me that the patterns of relationships and the capacities to form are critical first steps for teachers and administrators – Engagement Matters!

Defining Characteristic of Catholic Schools

The characteristics define the deep Catholic identity of Catholic schools and serve as the platform on which the standards and benchmarks rest. One of the nine defining characteristics of Catholic Schools is how we are shaped by communion and community. Catholic school education places an emphasis on the school as community—an educational community of persons and a genuine community of faith. (Lay Catholics in Schools, 22, 41) Catholic schools should do everything they can to promote genuine trust and collaboration among teachers, with parents as the primary educators of their children, and with governing body members to foster

appreciation of different gifts that build up a learning and faith community and strengthen academic excellence (Lay Catholics in Schools, 78). The Catholic school should pay especially close attention to the quality of interpersonal relations between teachers and students, ensuring that the student is seen as a person whose intellectual growth is harmonized with spiritual, religious, emotional, and social growth (The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium, 18). Ozar, L. A., & Weitzel-O'Neill, P. (Eds.). (2012).

Getting Started with Engagement

The following provides a sampling of engagement activities for your faculty and staff to try throughout the school year.

Starting the Year (August/September)

A back to school retreat or other spiritual experience for the faculty and staff is a must. Like a progressive dinner, have your retreat in four separate places (teachers' homes, rectory, park, etc…) and break the retreat into four experiences. Begin in prayer as a group, participate in the progressive retreat day, and end with Mass.

The Nine Week Pick Me Upper (October)

At a faculty meeting in early October, conduct a Pumpkin Contest! Create stations with all the necessary items to carve a pumpkin. Carefully select teams and set a time limit to create. Teams work to design the best Jack-O-Latern and when finished will add a name for the pumpkin. Prominently display the pumpkins in the school. A team of students will eventually judge and the winning group receives a small prize and the pride of winning the pumpkin challenge!

Christmas Celebration (December/Early January)

A Christmas celebration with all faculty and staff is the perfect place to create engagement among the faculty and staff. Each year, choose one game. The game could be the Newlywed Game, Family Feud, Musical Chairs, Casino Night, Minute to Win It, Karaoke Contest, or even a spoof on a beauty contest. I recommend changing the game each year. The easiest game to try is Musical Chairs. We gave one cash prize for the winner and some smaller gifts to individuals who were considered to be the best dancer and most spirited.

Where is Spring Break? (February)

In February, it seems everyone is getting cabin fever and looking forward to spring break. Since the break is still several weeks away, why not throw a spring break luncheon. Turn the teachers' lounge into a sandy, sunny destination. Bring in beach towels, beach balls, and sand pails, with sunglasses as a give-a-way to everyone who attends. Of course, the food should be beach related. To add a little extra twist, choose a letter of the alphabet (like the letter C) and have all the foods begin with that letter!

<u>Not Over Yet (May/June)</u>

Do not let the ending of the school year pass without an opportunity to engage the staff one more time before summer break. At the end of the closing faculty meeting, ask the teachers to look under their chairs and grab the brown paper bag. Roll dice and have them pass their bag to the right with the corresponding number on the dice. Roll again and pass the bags to the left. Do this numerous times. Let them open their bags. The bags contain items from the school's lost and found – seriously! Faculty and staff love the gifts, I promise. I also put a $20 bill in one of the bags just for fun!

I look forward to sharing much more with you at the Convention. The session will be fun, interactive, and of course ENGAGING! See you in Indianapolis!!