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TO: Board of Education
FROM: Dale Ellis
DATE: February 6, 2012
SUBJ: INFORMATION ITEM (School Visit Process)

One hallmark of continuous improvement is the sharing of best practices. We do that with teachers at each school through the recording, posting, and sharing of PLC minutes and notes. Each school can look at the work of similar grade levels at other schools that are getting quality results on assessments. This process keeps our teachers up to date on the latest, most effective teaching methods. Our instructional facilitators also meet twice per month to facilitate discussion on what is working in our classrooms and what is not. Principals meet each month to receive training on relevant issues and discuss what is working in their schools. It is in this final area, administration, that I feel we need to take a few additional steps to share best practices in a more formal and positive way.

With that thought in mind, we are currently developing a process of school visitations where principals will visit other schools to see what that school does particularly well. This process will allow administrators to see what is happening in other schools and to emulate the practices that they wish to improve upon at their own school. I feel that seeing it will be much better than talking about it. We often ask teachers to watch master teachers teach as a means of improvement. But, administrators rarely venture into other schools to see what they are doing well. It will take a day or so away from the home school, but I feel it will be well worth the time. These visits will be the first step in expanding our best practice sharing process and building a sense of family in reaching ALL kids...with a focus that they are ALL our kids, not just the students in the home school.

Attached is a list generated by principals of the processes that they would like to see during the school visits. The executive cabinet will develop a master list of "look fors" at different schools.

I will be available to answer any questions you may have.

School Visit Feedback – January 2012

“LOOK FORS”:

How students are engaged ---→ Consistency

Use of data in daily instruction

Student work displays

Student/Staff recognition

Cleanliness/Safety

Parental engagement

PLC best practices

Grade-level specific best instructional practices

How visibility is achieved

How instructional support (media, etc.) is used

How EC/Inclusive practices are utilized

ESL best practices

How project-based learning is used

Next Steps

Keep the focus on Best Practices

Develop a rubric

Each school will highlight a specific focus area for the principal's visit

Schedule TBD and dates assigned