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dateSat, Jan 23, 2010 at 1:33 PM
subjectParagraph

Hi Larry,

I am Russell Hughes, principal of Walton High School in Defuniak Springs, Florida. I attended one of your conferences two years ago in Tallahassee, Florida. I left your conference with a list of strategies as well as a plan to implement them at the mid point of the year. I had just been moved from a middle school where I was blessed to lead a population of students that carried a free and reduced lunch status of more than 64%. With much love, direction and the thought that we were the best middle school in the state of Florida we made the coveted "A" as well as AYP for the first and only time since school grading was initiated in our state. Given this accomplishment my superintendent placed me at our feeder high school that had been graded a "D" school. The first theme at my new school was "Academic Ambush" our students and teachers grasped the theme and met all challenges towards receiving School Recognition funds each year I have been principal. You would not believe the confidence, pride and dignity our school and community, has experienced since this achievement. Without a doubt, a key part of this success was two very distinct practices you shared at your conference. The first was the "Essential Questions" that I had to ask myself, my School Improvement Team, administrative staff and teachers. This set me on the perfect track to systematically changing the culture of the school and effectively implementing effective strategies tailored to the needs of our population. The other key was the immediate adoption of "Power Words" in which we added two that we felt were imperative to our math needs(extrapolate and interpolate). We developed an array of skills and practices to assist our students in acquiring these words and of course many follow up activities that would ascertain their comprehension of the words and their usage. Many days I stood in the hallway between classes with a bag of Jolly Ranchers and asked children for a power word; amazing what they will do for a Jolly Rancher. They absolutely love t validation by reward; although it was impressed upon me this would not work with "high schoolers." I can not thank you enough for the best conference I have ever attended. To that effect, I had it written in our School Improvement Plan that teachers from my school would attend your conference this year. With the difficult budget year in our county and state all funds are distributed by our district office and dispersed with great discretion. We felt your material was so imperative and adamantly insisted and received our districts approval for two of my teachers to attend your Jacksonville conference this week. Elicia Gray and Lynne Martin are going to be two of your "Wonderful Ones" in the city of Jacksonville, Florida, please give them my regards. You Larry are changing lives at a rate you will never be able to measure. May God Bless you in all your endeavors.

With Great Appreciation,
A. Russell Hughes

Larry's Note: This principal had success with Larry Bell's strategies at the middle school level. Now he is having the same success at the high school level. "NO EXCUSES."