

High Morale - Goodbye Blues

by Monte Selby

High Morale - Goodbye Blues seems to be a session topic that always fills the room at conferences, so I'm passing along a bit of writing I recently shared with ATPE members in Texas. I believe that in every school, right now is the right time of year to boost morale. Each person can choose to be part of the *high morale - goodbye blues* strategy. Morale is serious--seriously important to a great working and learning environment--but I promise to keep this brief, practical, and lighthearted.

To affect morale, most people think of events. A staff party. Discovering a chocolate mint with a "you're worth a mint" note attached. Cash. As in, "you're as bright as this new penny!." Events are okay, and they can elevate morale - at least until the chocolate mint dissolves.

When I was a principal, sometimes on a dismal day (like when they predicted a major school-closing snow storm that missed town), we'd run to the store, grab some ice cream or sherbet, locate soda and cups, steal a library cart (dangerous), and run around after school making floats for the staff. That would get us out of classrooms, into the hallway telling stories, and leave us a bit more energized and connected. FYI - when students ask for a float, tell them it's a perk they'll get when they become an educator.

More lasting than the morale "event", is the morale "process". Here's a powerful example that won't cost a dime. For the next two weeks, start *every* meeting (IEPs included) with five minutes of sharing successes (as in, no whining). If each staff member arrives with three examples of student, staff, parent, or community successes, it'll change morale at school. Keep it simple. A student who opens a door for a classmate is a success. Pay attention. The more people look for successes, the more they see. Suddenly, school looks a little brighter. Plus, it's nice coming to school knowing others are looking for opportunities to report on *your* successes.

For a real challenge, consider this. I'm from a family of songwriters. You've heard our songs through radio, TV, commercials, websites, conferences, movies, etc. We often write as if we're watching the "action" take place, and we use specific techniques to keep that song stuck in your head. You can use the brain compatible power of music to your advantage. Pick a powerful song that describes your school at it's ideal best - the most inspiring song you know. Now take video of students, staff, and parents at their best (classroom, hallway, lunchroom, ball games, concerts, dances, etc). A music video of great people illustrating the words to a great song is inspiring and unforgettable. It can change morale at school. Need a song? Email me!

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