

Reflection #1

The first element that I believe is important for team engagement is number 7, “At work, my opinions seem to count”. This is one of the most important things for educators to have in their teams, because I wholeheartedly believe that, as teachers, we are the ones who know our students best. There are districts, mine included, where many people in positions of leadership in schools or at the district level have spent minimal time in a classroom. It is entirely possible to have a great principal or superintendent who hasn’t spent a lot of time in the classroom, however, they need to work closely with those that have spent and consistently spend time in a classroom.

When teachers advocate for something for our students, it is important that our ideas are taken into account, as we are the ones who see our students on a daily basis. When great teachers feel as though their opinions are not respected, they move to districts that do respect their opinions and ideas, hurting our students. Additionally, when teachers’ opinions count, decisions are made that directly impact our students in immediate and positive ways.

This leads me to the next element that I believe is important for team engagement in schools, number 2, “I have the materials and equipment I need to do my work right”. This element falls in both categories for me. I believe that it is vital for student success in schools, but I also believe that I currently don’t possess this element. In order for students to be successful, teachers need to have equipment and adequate materials. Districts need to provide great textbooks or curriculum in order for students to be successful. Students should be given access to things like flexible seating or manipulatives to work with. Teachers should be given top of the line materials, not have to buy pencils out of their own pockets. If teachers are given the materials and equipment they need, it directly impacts our students and allows them the best

opportunities to learn and grow. Students with these will engage more within the curriculum and with their teachers.

Element number 2 is something that I don't currently possess in my workplace. I don't feel that I have been given all the materials and equipment that I need to do my job. Class sizes to me are an important element that teachers need to succeed. First, I feel that I have been given too many students to teach at once. Most of my classes that I teach exceed 30 students. This leads to me dealing with more behavior problems and not being able to give my students the individualized attention that they need and deserve. This is a hard thing to bring change too, as this is often outside my control. However, I know that our union is working hard to advocate for class size caps, which would allow me to more effectively do my job. Another example of having adequate materials and equipment would be to have a great curriculum readily available to me and my fellow teachers. We do have access to textbooks, but we haven't received new textbooks since 2008. While this is not as important for students in mathematics, it would be nice to have updated materials. In order to make sure we are giving our students the best curriculum we can, other teachers and I are currently working on recreating our curriculum for our students. This is an example of how we have brought about change for our students to ensure that they have accessible materials.

A final element that I believe I do not currently possess in my workplace is element number 1, "I know what is expected of me at work". This element is important for me to possess because when I know what results I am being expected to achieve, I can tailor the way I teach. For instance, our district is very concerned with making sure that we bring our MCA test results up, but at the same time, argues that these results don't give us accurate data. To me this is very frustrating, as I am not sure what the administration wants. Do they want us to spend more time

reviewing MCA material, or do they want us to continue trying to teach our students in the ways we know best? Another instance where I feel as though I don't know what is expected of me is during my observations. For instance, during my most recent observation, my principal said that he would like to see more engagement in my classroom. However, during the lesson he observed, I felt that I had great engagement in my classroom from students. When I asked for specific examples of where he would like to see more engagement, my principal just talked around the topic a bit, and never really gave me specifics. By not giving me clear expectations, it just heightens my anxiety about being a 3rd year teacher approaching tenure and about observations in general. I am more than willing to add more engagement elements into my lesson, but it is important I know what my admin is looking for.