



THE SPARTAN SENTINEL

Vol 39 - 10

Rosendale-Brandon School District Newspaper

June 5, 2020

Improvement Through Reflection

Submitted by Superintendent Wayne Weber

Reflection is the most powerful practice we can engage in as learners and leaders. Honest self-reflection strengthens our self-awareness and leads us to better decision-making. Organizations committed to practicing meaningful reflection are better able to reach higher potential for creativity and success. Regardless of who you are or what activity you engage in, the ability to meaningfully reflect on an experience will lead to the potential for greater success in future experiences.

As educators, we are asked to reflect individually and organizationally as a regular order of business. We focus on a continuous improvement model to guide our practices and our professional development. Never has that reflection been more important than over the past few months! Due to factors out of our control, staff was required to educate and feed students in a manner we've never engaged in before, and students were required to learn in a manner very different from what they are accustomed to. Reflection was a constant with each lesson and delivery method tried. Some practices worked great! Some were far less effective and changes were implemented.

As this year comes to a close and we are not sure what is in store for us for the 2020-2021 school year, it is more important than ever to look at our successes and our opportunities for improvement. Quality reflection requires one to be honest, and with that honesty comes vulnerability. If we truly want to improve, we cannot be afraid to admit where we have the need to improve.

In part of our reflection we reviewed the challenges and inequities students and staff faced and points of pride we encountered during this experience. Listed below are a few items from our reflection:

Points of Pride:

- Students and parents working hard to complete activities as well as enrich their lives with time spent together. We see lots of smiling faces when we get photos from families. Families have been very supportive of our work as teachers, and it makes us proud to know we are helping them through this difficult situation
- Students and parents have done their best to navigate all of the online activities using Google Classroom. They have kept in contact with teachers as best they could to ask questions, get updates, and get things clarified using email, Hangouts, Google Classroom comments, and video chats. Despite many challenges, there have been so many successes as parents and students have adjusted to online, virtual learning.
- Students continue to receive instruction to move forward in their learning while

focusing on essential learning targets. For the most part, students adapted to online learning and have taken responsibility for their learning.

- Through effective communication with students, parents, and teachers, accommodations are being suggested / made everyday to help kids and their parents succeed.
- Teachers are learning so many new ways to teach and those skills will not be forgotten, so classrooms will be somewhat different when we return to face to face instruction. students are recognized in ways that online learning is helpful and ways that online learning is not enough, and they're sharing their thoughts. All of this will help improve education in the future
- We have learned that there are technological approaches that can be used even when our children return that allow students to remain silent in front of their peers but still anonymously express their opinions and share their answers so as to be heard.
- Our ability to provide quality lunches for the students in our district

Challenges/Inequities:

- Having unstable internet connections making live instruction impossible for a number of students
- Students who struggle the most at school continue to struggle from home, and we are limited in how much we can do.

- Differentiating for students is much more difficult. Some students are overwhelmed with the work and others are contacting teachers asking for more.
- Finding digital way to express the discussions we used to have in class especially with the variance of internet accessibility
- Trying to connect with students that we have not seen or heard from at all during this time. Repeated attempts to reach out to the student and parents with no response. We worry about them and what they are dealing with.
- Assessing student learning is difficult. Some students receive much, much more guidance than others. Difficult for the teacher to know exactly what the student has mastered.
- Teachers have a lot less control over managing student learning. In the classroom, if a student needs to complete a missing assignment or assessment, time can be carved out of the day to get it done. If a student is struggling to understand a specific skill or concept, the teacher can work individually with the student to reteach or provide support. In this realm, teachers rely on parents more than ever to either fill that gap by getting assignments and assessments done or to coordinate a time for the student and teacher to meet virtually. Due to varying family dynamics, students don't always get the support they need.
- Some students need extra support to connect to our learning materials and complete class activities. There are some students that are not with their parents during the day as parents are still working outside the home. This makes it difficult for some students to complete the activities assigned.
- Family dynamics play a big role. Some families are stretched too thin to provide academic support while others are too involved. The same is true when operating under normal circumstances, but it is magnified under current conditions.
- Parent support is an area of inequality. Many students have support from their parents, but I was surprised how many do not, and they are still succeeding. Many students are self-directed at home and are able to still work through their lessons. Those who do not have parent support or are working in near isolation need and should get extra support and contact from teachers. This is especially hard at the earliest grades where students don't have the skills or resources to reach out to others who can help them
- Internet connections can be problematic. Several families who live in the country have internet connectivity issues. Even during recorded videos and participating virtually, like through Google Meet, students can miss what is being said or not clearly see what is presented on the screen.

While this is not an exhaustive list of our what we discussed, it gives you a general feel for what we looked at. We are all looking forward to a day when we can safely welcome staff and students back into our buildings for face to face instruction. In the meantime, we will continue to use feedback from families and staff to improve our teaching and learning.

Here's wishing you all a wonderful summer!!

Students Create Art

Submitted by Teacher Robin O'Brien

Brandon School eighth grade students created portrait drawings inspired by the artist Chuck Close.

Cole Theyerl, 8th Grade artist, created a portrait drawing of his friend and classmate, Evan.



8th Grader Karsyn Buteyn drew a fantastic portrait of actor Danny Devito.



8th Grader Aidan Lynch's creativity and drawing skills are on display in his portrait drawing.

