

November 28, 2011



Dear Key Communicators:

It is very easy for us (myself included) to get caught up in our own little bubble in Estacada. We face stress, frustration, and challenges that we feel nobody else can sympathize with. For this reason, it is nice to step outside of that bubble for a bit and talk with people from other districts about what they are going through. What I can tell you is that I walked away feeling so incredibly proud of what we have built (and continue to build) in Estacada.

Ryan Carpenter (social studies teacher from EHS) also attended the workshop. We went to various breakout sessions, and it quickly became very clear to us that Estacada is way ahead of the game in terms of Proficiency-Based Teaching, Learning, and Assessment. Early on in the workshop, I overheard a group of educators talking. This group must have just come from a session that Ryan attended. They didn't know that I was also from Estacada. They said, "Have you heard what Estacada is doing? They have systems and structures in place to actually make all of this stuff possible! We need to call them and ask for their bell schedules and grading policies. I'd also like to go out there and visit to see it in action." By the end of the workshop, Ryan and I had both given out our e-mail addresses and phone numbers several times. People in districts from around the state are very impressed and interested in how we do things. We always look to beg, borrow, and steal good ideas from others. However, it is also nice to be viewed as the "gold standard" from time to time - a district that is willing to take risks and be creative with the resources it has available in order to do what is best for kids.

Doing all of this, as we know, is hard work. However, I think it is important to note that other districts are trying to do all of this work without dedicated time carved out in their daily/weekly schedules. They were very envious of what we already have in place. For example, they don't have:

- \*Weekly PLC time (many do have at least this...but not everyone)
- \*Regular, strategic staff development time
- \*Time within the regular school day for re-teaching, intervention, re-assessing, and enrichment (Homeroom/Tiger Tutorial, Flex Friday Sessions)
- \*Focused after school interventions and enrichment (Homework Club, other clubs)
- \*Grants and partnerships with agencies to help their at-risk youth

On day two of the workshop, there were four "expert" teachers on Proficiency-Based Teaching, Learning, and Assessment who presented. They were good, but by the end, even the "experts" were acknowledging to Ryan and I that their schools and districts (as a whole) were not even close to being as far along as Estacada. Over the course of the two days, Ryan and I were getting just as many (if not more) questions than the "experts" were.

You are doing great work! You are doing what is best for kids! It takes a lot of effort, organization, and planning, but hold your heads high. You are leading educators - at the forefront of what is possible in education. Keep up the fantastic work!

Sincerely,

Dan Draper  
Principal, Estacada Junior High  
P- 503-630-8516, ext. 2502  
F- 503-630-8693