

Math in Action

Building a Community of Learners – A Principal's Perspective

>> ...whenever I bring people through the school, is our students stand out. The school is really a very collaborative place. And we value collaboration, both for students, but also for our staff. So we worked hard in the beginning, our staff, of understanding that it's okay to be uncomfortable in what we're doing. I think it's critical that we have student voice in the school. The students need to feel part. They need to own the school as much as anyone else. So I think that's been really strategic. It's valuing its students, that we have really authentic work up in the halls. And I think that's so critical. It shows the dynamic flow of our school. The way I would describe it is, really true, authentic examples of what's going on in the rooms.

>> It'll be, like, look at what happened to our tap water. Use bottled water.

>> If I put another -- bring it to, like, 400.

>> Five...

>> The conditions that you put are opening it up. And you open it up for staff. The same way, then, staff can open it up to students. You really look at what do we want of math learning to look like, feel like and sound like in our school? We have really good conversation around, what does it mean? What do we want from our students? What do we want as their real outcome in mathematics? We want them to use mathematics as a way of making sense of the world around them. That's so critical. And that can't come from a textbook. It has to come from the real world.

>> I don't like textbook-heavy work.

>> I haven't even touched my textbook the whole year.

>> See?

>> Working to clear conditions that ensure full-time employment.

>> It's not always, like, listen to the teacher, writing it down. It's we're doing projects. Like, every time we learn a lesson -- we do learn lessons. And then we do a small little mini project to it.

>> There's things that you can do as a principal; one is creating a culture of, "yes." And I think that's important. Staff and students know that if they come to me, they have an inquiry, they have a passion, they have something that they want to try, the answer's going to be yes. And I think we need to do that. And it encourages risk-taking.

>> I thought about risk-taking, because there's so many risks you need to take for your projects. Like, for example, if I don't know the formula for it, that's a risk. So basically, I need to learn about it.

>> So if we were to apply it to a real-life situation, we could actually use that in life.

>> I think it is a very creative place. And again, I think it's very open about that, of talking about creativity as a skill that we need to encourage in students. The staff motivate me. So I always think, it's now I'm trying to keep up with the staff now, which is an amazing change from when we first started this journey, was letting go of my agenda and let the agenda of the school drive. The learning needs to drive what's happening in our school. As a leader, you have to be on top of things. You have to know what's going on out there, and you have to be one of the people that's going to help drive it.