

Student Well-being: A Collective Responsibility

Dan Taylor

Collaborative Decision-Making

DAN TAYLOR: From a principal's perspective, especially an elementary school principal's perspective, or indeed, as in my case, you're often the sole administrator of the school. And sometimes you can feel that the position's a bit isolating that way. You're sometimes on the phone talking to other colleagues and you're looking for other input, but the fact is that the school in which you are assigned as the principal is the area where you need to get the most input. And so, as a way of dealing with that idea of not looking at yourself as being isolated in this, but then looking at all the issues that come up as an administrator -- as many as possible -- where you can involve a collaborative effort or you can involve a collaborative approach to the different issues that come before you. Either assigned tasks that you know or do every year, or if it's things that have just kind of come up as the year has gone along. In terms of establishing a structure like that which enables people to feel that they can add their input to strengthen what we're doing, it's made my job as a principal that much more rewarding, and also I believe it's given me a bit different perspective on the role and allowed me to come to school early energised every day because you don't come in feeling that the answers are always going to be within you, but you do come in feeling that you're going to be able to come up with these answers required in a really -- it's not easy by any stretch. It takes a lot of work. But you know that by following a process like that, that really is collaborative, that does involved a lot of different voices, you're going to be coming up with an answer that's very rich, and a decision is going to be made for which everyone can at least agree that there is a real need for the decision that came to be, and that the voices were listened to in making that decisions, which, to me, makes a big difference in terms of what it means to be the administrator at a school. You still have the lead voice in a lot of ways. You're still the person who signs your name to a lot of things, but really what you're doing by signing your name to things, you're signing your name to a process that's involved a lot of people.