

Student Well-being: A Collective Responsibility

Dan Taylor

Collaborative Learning and Leading

DAN TAYLOR: As principal in the Toronto School Board, and as my tenth year as an administrator in the Toronto School Board, one of the things that I've always worked with in terms of looking to improve my own professional practice is being more of a collaborative learner, and a collaborative leader as an administrator. One of the things I really found from getting to become more involved with the Integrative Thinking at Rotman, and through the U of T a Rotman, has been that it's genuinely led to more collaborative learning and collaborative leading at a school level. So this is one of the things in terms of my own personal well-being, and a sort of administrative well-being is that it does take you from feeling a little bit more isolated, which can happen in this role, to feeling that you're much more an integral part of a team, as opposed to sort of doing things on your own.

This is my fourth year being involved with Integrative Thinking, and certainly my own abilities to use a lot of the methods that we've learned in those programs has become more rich over the years. This is my second year at Givins Shaw, and when I first came to the school, one of the things that I found through -- any administrator coming in new to a school always wants to find out more information about the school itself, the community, all of these things.

So one of the first things I found out upon getting there was that there was a real interest in the staff to become more involved with some school decision making. And the data we had to sort of illuminate that is, we had 85 percent of the staff saying that they have not been involved in school committees before, due to the fact they didn't feel it had any -- they didn't have any teeth. They didn't have any ability to truly impact school decisions. That was part of my thinking through the Integrative Thinking models at Givins Shaw, was how can we use this to become more of a collaborative learning community as professions in the school? How can we reach out to get more involvement both from the community voice, from the student voice, from the staff voice, and sort of look about at the different tasks that we need to accomplish as a school each year, to look at that as a way that we can -- to look at that in a manner that can involve far more people in a genuinely collaborative environment?