

Celebrating the Success of All Students

Case Study #1

Standard 1: A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by the school community.

Questions

1. How does an administrator demonstrate a belief in the educability and inclusion of all students?
2. How can the mission and vision statement be communicated through ceremonies for our Mi/MO ID (Mild/Moderate Intellectually Disabled) students, whose accomplishments are not always publicized to the school community?

Situation

Oaks High School, a suburban high school in DeKalb County, is heralded for consistently achieving AYP each year. The graduating class earns an excess of 10 million dollars in scholarship offers. However, due to the unpredictability of student behavior, pep rallies and assemblies are rare. When there are pep rallies and assemblies, they are usually in support of the school's athletic teams or held for class meetings.

Another mark of Oaks High commitment to high achievement is the success of the Mi/MO ID (Mild/Moderate Intellectually Disabled) students. They have excelled academically and athletically in the Special Olympics. Although their success in the Olympics was announced on the PA system, their teacher, Ms. H., desired an opportunity to celebrate and showcase her students' academic accomplishments with the entire student body. She requested that the principal, Mr. I., allow her students to plan and conduct an assembly. Her students would be responsible for all aspects of the assembly from the welcome to the closing. The assembly's format would include a discussion of some of the students' specific disabilities, demonstrate their achievement of their specific learning goals, and showcase their athletic talents. The main speaker, an intellectually disabled student, would answer questions at the end of the assembly.

Ms. H. shared that Mr. I. expressed concern about whether the student body would be respectful, sensitive, and/or attentive during the assembly. Aware of the school system's policy of inclusion along with the student confidentiality policy, he expressed concern about whether singling out the Mi/MO ID students violated the county's confidentiality policy. He also questioned if the county office would support his decision to hold the assembly if the students in attendance behavior was negative during the assembly or if some parents complained.

Ms. I. assured him that her students were more than capable of accomplishing their goals. Moreover, she expressed confidence in their abilities to handle any insensitive behavior of their peers. Despite his concerns, Mr. W agreed to the assembly. All participating students' parents/guardians must have signed permission agreeing to let the students participate in the assembly and disclose their disabilities. Instead of the entire student body being invited, he chose to hold the assembly in the auditorium. Teachers with good classroom management skills were the only ones invited.

The assembly was a success. The students in attendance were not only attentive but also inspired by the accomplishments of the students who conducted the assembly. One young lady in attendance said, "They are truly great students. I have a hard time speaking in front of my classmates, and there are only twenty of us. He [the speaker] just spoke in front of three hundred students, and he wasn't afraid."

Answers

1. Administrators must possess the belief that all students are capable of being educated. While administrators must adhere to board policy on confidentiality, administrators must not overlook the achievements of resource students but find ways to include all student achievement.
2. Armed with this knowledge, administrators must make sure that all segments of the student body are acknowledged and celebrated. Administrators must encourage teachers to offer suggestions and provide opportunities to showcase the abilities of all students—especially our students from the resource department.

Evaluation

The leadership style of Mr. I. can be characterized as developing. Although he was hesitant to allow the assembly, he empowered and trusted Ms. H. to assist her students in preparing and leading the assembly. As a result, the outcome was a success. The next year, he added more opportunities to celebrate student success via assemblies, plays, and the implementation of the student of the month.