

Taking Care of Adult Social/Emotional Needs

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This year has been interesting to say the least! There were so many things to plan and implement due to the pandemic. Our focus was, and should be, on student health, safety, and catching them up academically. Whether we welcomed students back virtually, face to face, or in a hybrid model, there was so much stress and anxiety.

During the summer break, as teachers would come in to the school or text me, I realized how much this stress was affecting the teachers. There was a lot of anxiety about coming back. I had also made the decision to change many of the grade level teams due to some toxicity, so that added to their stress. I knew that especially this year, we needed to work on the social and emotional well-being of teachers and staff.

I read and researched what other schools had done for adult well-being, and came up with lots of ideas. I decided to try quite a few things to see which things would be most beneficial. Here are the ideas that seemed to help our adult social and emotional well-being the most.

The Energy Bus. We did a book study of Jon Gordon's book *The Energy Bus*, and are putting the principles into practice. We have monthly themes for both students and staff. The staff also has Energy Bus notebooks. We use these in faculty meetings to do quick writes about how we are doing with the principles. Every staff member also has an Energy Partner that helps them with their goals and positive attitude.

"How Are We Feeling" Bulletin board. I wanted to keep a better handle on how teachers are feeling so every week or two I send out a Google Form and have teachers submit up to three words of how they are feeling. I then compile these into a word art (that looks like a bus), and hang them on a bulletin board in the faculty room. I put the date on the bottom, so that we can see how we are feeling as the year progresses. This has been very telling to us, and it helps me guide conversations, assignments, etc.

Guatemalan Worry Dolls. At the beginning of the year, I gave each staff member a Guatemalan Worry Doll. Parents in Guatemala give these to their children when they are worried about something. The children tell the dolls their worries before going to sleep and then put the doll under their pillows. This helps their anxiety go away. When I gave these to the teachers, I told them that there were a LOT of things that we do not have control over this year. As they start to feel anxious about these things, they are to talk to their worry dolls and try to let it go. As I go into classrooms, I see these worry dolls next to teachers' desks. I hope that they recognize the things they can control, and let go of what they cannot.

Being a "Keeper of the Vision" and the Energy Ambassador here at Lincoln, and at every school, is hard but fulfilling work. As administrators, we will continue to meet the challenges before us with creative and successful solutions.