

Dean of Students Positions – January 2017

I have been doing a lot of thinking about the dean position and some of the questions that have come up in regards to its importance and effectiveness. I wanted to provide some flashy data or statistics that would prove beyond a reasonable doubt that the position is life or death. Unfortunately that is not very easy to do. I could tell you about how many phone calls and emails I make to families each week but that would not do my contact with families any justice. Many of those conversations happen at morning drop off, after school pick-up or when families just show up at my door in the morning. The families that I have helped develop a better relationship with the school that are now calling in and reaching out for help that in the past would not have chosen to do so cannot be quantified as a data point.

I am not sure how to show as a statistic that I have arranged IEP meetings at a local agency to be sure that families without transportation could attend and then when a parent didn't show, gone and knocked on that door to get her to that meeting. How do I document the meetings that I have sat in just as a friendly face to a parent that I had been working with so that the parent was more comfortable and able to have difficult discussions about his or her child? How about the parent that felt that their child was a target of the school until I was able to have her watch bus video and get her to do a 180 about the way she feels about the staff at school and the drivers of First Student, how is that quantified?

Someone asked if behavior referrals had gone down with the deans and I might argue that we would see an initial increase in this statistic. I have been told that in the past some smaller issues were brushed aside because staff was overwhelmed and had bigger fish to fry. With the dean position we are now able to address smaller issues before they turn into larger ones. More students are now seen on a daily basis, often times just to check in and give a smile so that students know they have the support that they deserve. Over time I would expect to see referrals go down or at the very least the major behaviors reduced as we are able to nip things earlier. The behavior specialist can focus on the most challenging students without being bogged down with the daily recess, bus, and classroom issues.

We can easily show the data of the amount of staff observations and evaluations that the deans do that if we're not getting done would make it virtually impossible for the principals to meet the expectations of the current educator evaluation system. That said, I have not kept track of the hundreds of classroom visits I have made to make connections with staff and students that I have been told make a big difference in staff and student morale. I would also bet my paycheck that having the deans handle certain things has allowed building Principals a bit more freedom to meet their ever increasing demands as building, district, and community leaders.

There are countless other meetings attended (RTI, PAT, IEP, etc.), conversations had, students helped, and family connections made and I am happy to help or go into more detail if needed.

Do I think that the Dover school district would immediately fall apart if the dean positions were cut? No, because of the same reason the district has not fallen apart when other cuts have been made. There are simply too many dedicated staff that would not allow it to happen. There is however a breaking point. We can already see the frustration that teachers, case managers, paraprofessionals and many others have when more and more is added to their plates without the supports in place that in a quality school system are there for them. We can take away the dean positions and put all the above mentioned work

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back on other peoples' desks and we can let the minor issues turn into bigger ones before they are dealt with. I cannot imagine that is something we want to go back to. Again, I am not sure how to quantify much of this data but am happy to do it in a way that make sense to all stakeholders and that can demonstrate the value in these positions.