

Presentation to the SLCSB Board of Education
Newman Elementary School- September 1, 2009

Good evening. I appreciate the opportunity to share some information with you about Newman Elementary School tonight. I'm grateful to have a number of our faculty and staff here with me, as well as our Community Council Chair, JoDell Parke, and our new assistant principal, Janice Jones Schroeder.

Three years ago, when I heard that Mr. Bosich was going to retire, I asked Superintendent Withers if he would consider transferring me to Newman. I requested Newman because I thought my talents would be a good fit for Newman and I also wanted to make a difference in the community in which I live. The staff members have been supportive from the start and I think we have established a comfortable and productive relationship over the past two and a half years. Since coming to Newman, I have found nothing but capable teachers and staff members who are committed to making a positive difference for children. The students are terrific and are rewarding to work with. Parents are supportive of our efforts but most find it difficult to spend time as volunteers in the school.

Newman's demographics include:

- 500 students, Pre-K through 6th grade, including two IH-SpEd quadrant classes.
- 64% of our students are from ethnic minority groups (55% Hispanic).
- Approximately 45% of our students are English Language Learners. 70% of the faculty is ESL endorsed.
- 79% of students qualify for the Federal School Lunch Program, hence our designation as a Title I school.
- 15% of our students have disabilities significant enough to qualify for an IEP.
- Our mobility rate is relatively low, around 15%. No large apartment complexes are in our boundaries.

I have heard often from others who have been in our school, and I have felt it myself, that Newman has a special feel about it. Data confirms that students are progressing and gaps are being closed. We recognize that we have enjoyed some significant success but, as is typical for our staff, we celebrate for a few minutes and then go back to work.

I was asked to frame the presentation tonight in the following context:

- What factors within the school's control do you credit as essential to these outstanding student achievement results?
- Which of the school's actions should the district study and attempt to replicate in an effort to help other Title I schools achieve at levels similar to Newman's?

What makes Newman tick? In an effort to get to the guts of the things we have control over that are critical to Newman's success, I asked our faculty and a few other parents and support people for their thoughts. Here is a compilation of what they and I feel makes the difference. Some are unique and others are not, but we feel that any school would benefit from developing similar components:

- **Belief** in our students- We really do try to not lose sight of the fact that the end all in education is not the CRT. We believe we have an obligation to help develop good people as well as smart people. It all is really about the kids.
- **Schedule**- We operate from an explicit daily school schedule that helps us stay organized and get to the important things. We rarely have Short Days. With the exception of the first and last few days of the school year, we have just 5 short days during the year. We have a consistent schedule that is helpful for students and families alike.
- **Communication**- Staff is kept informed of events, expectations and issues. Students and families likewise. We communicate through writing, email, website, phone calls, and eye-to-eye and we do it in two languages consistently. We also strive to listen well.
- **Teamwork and professional respect**- People feel appreciated at Newman. We are supportive of one another, personally and professionally. One does not find an atmosphere of competition at Newman, rather mutual support and encouragement. We work and play well together. Issues and conflicts are handled in an attitude of honesty and support. We handle crisis in a calm way. There is an attitude that everyone at Newman is just as important as anyone else. Our roles may be different but we all have an important contribution to make.
- **Forward Thinking**- Because Newman has made AYP every year since the inception of the No Child Left Behind Act, we have had the luxury of having an attitude of moving onward rather than retrenching to go back and pick up pieces. There is a feeling of autonomy, both individually and school-wide. We're not wasting time looking over our shoulders. We feel supported but not micro-managed.
- **Positive Approach**- We are supportive of district expectations and make an effort to approach those expectations in a positive way rather than wasting a lot of energy complaining. We participate in district-sponsored professional development. Teachers rarely miss those opportunities. We also utilize the district coaches in effective and productive ways.
- **Variety**- We have a stable staff and a healthy mix of experienced teacher enthusiasm and new teacher enthusiasm. Our involvement in the BYU Urban Education Program brings 3 new, well-mentored teacher interns to our school each year as well as several practicum students who work in classrooms and receive the benefits of working with our faculty. Their energy and hopes remind us why we're doing this.

- **Leadership-** The principal is invested in the school and strives to inspire others to be great. Also, the person closest to the front door (our secretary ,Pam Haslam) is a master of public relations. There are none better.
- **Collaboration.** Teachers have a 90 minute block of time each week while their students rotate between PE, Computer and Library. Time is used to discuss curriculum and student work and to coordinate planning. Our non-homeroom teachers are actively involved in helping both teachers and students.
- **High Expectations-** We have high expectations for student behavior and a well-developed, comprehensive, school-wide behavior plan. Students are rewarded for positive behavior and receive consequences for inappropriate behavior that are consistent and fair.
- **Positive Reinforcement-** We focus on a limited number of critical factors that contribute to our success. For example, each month we have a Tiger Hunt (We are the Newman Tigers). This is an opportunity for each teacher to nominate one student in each of 4 focus areas. Students are recognized and rewarded in the assembly. We also have weekly recognitions announced during my Monday morning video broadcast in each of the areas of focus. We believe that paying attention to these areas, talking about them regularly, and recognizing students who are modeling these behaviors result in greater frequency of compliance and progress. The areas are: R- We are Respectful and Responsible (Citations have decreased over the past two years), O- We are On Time Everyday (attendance has improved), A- We are Active (our students walked almost 10K miles last year and we achieved the gold level in the Gold Medal School Program), and R- We are Reading Everyday (we participate in the Road to Success program- our students read a total of 2.25 million minutes last year). So every month in our Tiger Hunt our student body is yelling at the top of their lungs- “We are the Tigers, Hear us ROAR!”
- **Extra Time-** Our after-school program is well-run and has about 100 students enrolled. Students receive academic support and involvement in healthy activities in a safe atmosphere.
- **Key Partners-**We have some key parents who step up and volunteer time to serve on our SCC and PTA. They make a big difference. We also have volunteers from Ensign Stake and LDS Business College who help with our reading intervention program.

William Purkey, in his book Inviting School Success, identified 5 major areas that facilitate success in schools. They are:

- Respect for Individual Uniqueness
- Cooperative Spirit
- Sense of Belonging
- Pleasing Habitat, and
- Positive Expectations

I believe we see these components at Newman and they reflect who we are and guide what we’re doing.

The last question about our slip in math proficiency levels, particularly with our ELLs, is difficult to answer but I believe implementing two new programs (math and reading) in the same year last year channeled some energies from our usual mode of operating.

- There were some specific concept areas (Measurement in 3rd, 4th and 6th and Area and Volume in 5th G) that students really struggled with. Large numbers of students in most every classroom performed less well on these concepts than on the other parts of the test. ELL students had a particularly difficult time reaching proficiency on these concepts.
- The school, as a whole, will pay closer attention to those concepts this year. We will work with our math coach and focus on challenges from last year during our weekly collaborative sessions. Each teacher will have the opportunity to discuss with me during their fall collaborative meetings reasons why these two areas were problematic and to set some individual goals. We will utilize both the district pacing maps and the benchmark tests to monitor student progress throughout the year.
- We understand the increased difficulty of the new CRT and take very seriously our responsibility to support students to reach higher levels of proficiency. We recognize that many of our students who have scored proficiently in the past will need to be even more skilled to continue to reach proficiency.

Thank you for your invitation to visit with you tonight.