

A collegial school environment

A module in The Glass Classroom workshop

Collegial teachers support their school



www.glassclassrom.net

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Karen's become a celebrity in her school staff room

Karen Berg is like teachers the world over – passionate about her students, desperate to give them the attention they deserved, but stretched to her very limits.

She was frustrated by the lack of staff morale and team spirit in her school. The principal tried hard to get support and enthusiasm from the staff, but on many days it was an uphill battle to stir any sense of commitment and esprit de corps.

Karen decided to introduce a collegial team development program. She started by choosing some close allies and then let her plan spread through the staffroom.

A collegial school environment

Before starting this module you may wish to review the questions at www.glssclassroom.net and go to the pull down menu and choose the Why Teach? And Reflective Teacher pages.

What Staff Can Do To Spread The Good News

Teaching staff are the front line of your school's image and reputation. Creating a collegial approach to improving your school's image through active teacher commitment is a strong starting point for any program to improve the public perception of your school.

Optimism breeds success. It motivates, inspires, and unites. Children and teachers thrive in environments that are full of hope and encouragement. Unfortunately, there is too little optimism and too much doom and gloom, generating a perception of widespread failure, demoralizing the

profession, and crippling efforts to recruit and retain quality educators.

Inspiring educators to become ambassadors will strengthen pride and public confidence in the education profession and in your schools. It will unite campus and district staff around the purpose of the organization and put distractions into proper perspective.

Demonstrate loyalty and pride

There are many reasons “why” education needs good ambassadors, but as teachers the most important is *pride*. Karen decided that changing the conversation about our schools must start with all of us who serve in our schools. It starts with the small task of going public with the pride we take in what we do.

People who know us and trust us will listen to what we have to say about our school.

Everyone in our profession wants to improve, to grow, to find new and better ways to teach our kids. We must be the ones to remind people that this job is about the kids, not rhetoric. Speaking well of our profession is a matter of pride, but also loyalty.

There's nothing more compelling than saying something like, "I work at that school, and what you are saying is just not true to people spreading fibs in the community."

Homework Assignment

Identify a minimum of 25 headlines featuring strengths and achievements on your campus or in your department over the last two years. Engage your campus colleagues in this assignment.

Engage a few of your colleagues in a scavenger hunt for your

campus or department's greatest achievements, then share them in a staff meeting or via an email.

Tell your spouse or another family member that you love your job, then tell another person the same message each day for 30 days.

Hard Optimism Assignment

Practice: Control the life-shaping power of your thoughts and attitudes

Practice: Assess your current level of optimism

Practice: Recognize and dispute pessimistic thoughts

Speak well of our profession.

To strengthen our school, those of us who represent it must strengthen our bond to one another and to our profession by acting and speaking in loyalty not only to the school, but also to our school leaders. We may not always agree with every decision, but we are all on the same team. Speaking ill of your school or any of your teammates is damaging to the profession and weakens public trust.

"I'm a teacher. I have the greatest job in the world. I teach children and create meaningful lives."

Share your concerns and disagreements internally, not outwardly, and with respect for the other party.

Like hope, loyalty also requires regular exercise, around the clock.

Karen reminded her colleagues that she is a member of the education profession 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

As a teacher when I am in line at the bank or at the bakery,

and someone asks me about something going on at my school, I have two choices. I can perpetuate whatever misconceptions the individual may have by sharing my negative, frustrated opinion, or I can set the record straight and share something positive that I have experienced recently.

The best way to alter public perception of your school is by altering interactions with people, one conversation at a time, from what could have been reinforcement of a negative belief to creation of a positive impression.

Lift the spirits of your colleagues.

Homework Assignment

Create final copy of your headlines flier or brochure and get it approved through proper channels. Then, send a copy home with every student and hand out a copy to every colleague on your campus or in your department. Post them on your campus website. Select your favourite and add it to your email signature. Finally, come up with one creative way on your own to communicate these headlines to your target audiences.

Practice speaking well of your colleagues with others.
Compliment a colleague at least once daily for 30 days.

“You never get a second chance to make a good first impression.”

Get yourself a wardrobe accountability partner! Muster the courage to partner with a colleague to review each other's professional wardrobe.

Be courageous if you encounter a colleague with a wardrobe foul. Speak up and ask them to cover up, for the sake of the children!

Hard Optimism Assignment

Practice: Play to your signature strengths

Practice: Go for flow

Practice: Act the way you want to feel

Celebrate

Our schools succeed all the time, but we let it pass without so much as a high five. Celebrations inspire, motivate, and energize. They raise morale, boost self-confidence, remove fear, reduce stress, and help us move boldly toward the future. Why in the world are we not celebrating?

If a campus celebrates the good times, then when the stormy times in education come, we have shared our successes with our families and friends so they know the storm is the anomaly and not the norm.

Celebrating inspires and encourages everyone to work harder and to go the extra mile to make the difference in our schools. There are many ways a campus can celebrate successes — even small ones.

There is much to celebrate!

“When people are celebrated they feel better about themselves and develop more dedication and enthusiasm toward their work.”

Homework Assignment

Select 10 colleagues you admire and send them each a handwritten note to let them know how much you enjoy working with them. Short and sweet!

Find something on your campus or in your department that is worthy of celebration, then coordinate a small celebration event for your team.

Handwritten postcards: In this day and age of electronic communication, let us not underestimate the power of a hand-written note. Especially if it arrives in your home mailbox mixed in with all the bills and junk mail!

Know your strengths

You can't celebrate what you don't know about. For us to be ambassadors of the strengths and achievements of our profession, we first have to educate ourselves about them. We need to commit a few to memory and know where to find the rest.

We've all had students for whom school is a safe place to come every day, where they do not go hungry, where they are not beaten down but built up, loved, nurtured, and respected. For some children school is the only place where those things happen. While knowing and understanding the data and being able to explain it is important, remembering to share those successes that are not so easily measured is also vital. How many of us have heartbreaking stories about children who have passed through our classrooms?

Our colleagues and our students are worth the effort

Stop feeding the beast

"If you can't say something nice, don't say anything at all."

Although there are many out there attempting to undermine public confidence in what we do, no one damages our image more effectively than we do. Yes, I just said that. We educators are our own worst enemies!

“We have met the enemy and he is us.”

Not all of us are enemies all the time, but we are all enemies on a range of “at least once in a while” to “more often than not”. Fortunately, most of us in education fall in on the front end of this range when it comes to our own behaviors and conversations about our profession.

Exactly what do I mean by keeping an eye out for words and actions that reflect poorly on our profession? The best way to explain is through example, and there are plenty of them worth noting. How many news stories have you heard about involving **inappropriate relationships** with students? What about **inappropriate photos** on Facebook or elsewhere on the Internet? When these isolated and rare instances happen, the entire profession takes a hit, not just that one teacher or school.

If a teacher in Sydney sinks below the moral standard we all hold ourselves to, and that story makes national news, it’s a dark day for teachers across Australia. It reinforces this growing belief that immorality is pervading our nation’s teaching work force. Just one incident daily by one teacher out of the hundreds of thousands who serve our schools and communities condemns the entire institution for the day.

Homework Assignment

Select the top 10 strongest achievements from your list of 25 and create a flier or brochure that can be sent home and handed out to prospective home buyers, visitors, or colleagues.

Hard Optimism Assignment

Practice: Use positive reappraisal to handle problems and disappointments

Practice: Make hope a habit

Practice: Practice gratitude and forgiveness

Be knowledgeable about the profession

We are thoroughly schooled and prepared on the “how” of being a teacher but not at all about the operational side of our profession. How much do you know about school finance? Do you know what all of those acronyms mean, much less explain them? Where does the money come from that pays our salaries? Who pays the light bill and where do they get the money? Why do we teach what we teach, and why is there so much testing involved?

Education’s purpose is to replace an empty mind with an open one.

Strengthen your communications skills

“The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place.” — *George Bernard Shaw*

Communicating with parents is an area that most of us have had many lessons on in our staff development. What we haven’t been trained in is to consider all communication, internally with colleagues and externally with members of the community, in a public relations context... meetings, emails, phone calls, letters, Facebook messages, Tweets, blog posts, face-to-face meetings, random encounters, and such.

First, establish a professional relationship with your students’ parents.

Although you may develop friendly relationships with parents, when a community member has a child in our class we should treat that as a professional relationship.

Take a look at different examples of parent letters, emails, and Facebook status updates and how you can make each and every message you send out from your classroom and school a positive interaction, a message of pride in what you do, and a celebration of success.

Homework assignment

Create a campus, grade level, or department Facebook page for professional use only.

Place a call to the parents of each student in your class(es) over the next 30 days and brag on their child about something they did well.

Karen gained a lot of support for her efforts within her staff room.

Her colleagues made these comments

“The Collegial Support Training reminded me of why I became a teacher – to positively influence the lives of students and families. I learned how to sell my profession and be proud and vocal regarding all the wonderful things that are happening in our public schools. I embrace my new challenge of spreading the good word.”

“I really, really hope we can continue, formally, meeting and sharing. I think this is a great place to stoke the flames of positive success.”

“This training teaches you to share the absolute joy of school teaching and how to brag about how awesome your school/individual students are! It brings a sense of passion and positivity to the job and helps you learn how to focus on our many successes and encourages us to share with the community. We need to celebrate our school -- this training teaches you how to do just that. :)

Are you moved to change the way you and your colleagues support each other and the education you provide? How can you make such a splash?

You can bring the Glass Classroom Workshop to your school.

The Glass Classroom workshop is a professional development program designed to change the conversation about your school from the inside out. This training addresses attitudes and mindsets, helps each teacher to step up as ambassadors for themselves, their classrooms, school, and profession. The workshop program is designed to celebrate your many achievements, honour those who work in your school and more importantly, spread the good news.

Bring this remarkable teacher development workshop to your school. You will be challenged to think differently about your role as a teacher; to identify forces that weaken trust and confidence in your school and to establish strategies to restore pride, hope, optimism and confidence throughout your school community.

Two hours of engaging and practical training.

Program:

- The Glass Classroom
- What parents want from their child's teacher
- Building relationships and sharing information
- GEOfastic - brand your teaching style
- Be a story teller - share the good news
- The digital teacher - use social media to shout out
- The teacher book
- Teachers as champions and ambassadors
- A collegial school environment

To enquire about bringing Michael to your school to conduct a workshop email your enquiry to schoolbrands@iprimus.com.au

More information and video support resources are available at:

Web: www.glassclassroom.net

Email schoolbrands@iprimus.com.au