

Of all the *Habits* of Covey's "***Leader in Me***" performance improvement initiative, Habit 5, "Seek First to Understand, Then to Be Understood", is very important to us as adults, but to our students as well. Based on the principles of respect, mutual understanding, empathy, and courage, the greatest need of a human being is to be understood, to be affirmed, and to be appreciated.

My fear with this next generation of technology-driven young adults, is the reduction of face to face communicative skills, due to the social media craze that surrounds them. We must be intentional about teaching the importance of face-to-face conversation, mature debate, and negotiation through compromise. It has become commonplace for our young people, as well as our older generations, to only focus on communicating our own needs or focusing on offending others in an effort to intimidate or gain personal victory.

Through the **Leader In Me** paradigm shift, we realize the greater influence with others is to truly understand them first through effective listening skills. Several of our LIM Student Leadership Team has expressed interest in organizing a Speech and Debate Club at Edgerton. What better way to develop improved verbal skills! As I recollect my best classes in high school or at OSU, they were without a doubt those classes that involved developing my abilities to stand in front of my peers and share my thoughts or develop a platform around specific ideas or beliefs. If you attended EHS back in the day, I'm sure you have fond memories of Mr. Smith's classes such as Speech, Advanced Comp, or Great Authors. Bulldog Nation, there is no better training we can provide to our students!! Mr. Smith, thank you for pushing me as a student, back in the '80s, to develop an ability to have face-to-face conversations

Sadly, many things posted with a "hashtag" or other network tirades would never be said if looking in the face of others. To be truthful, conflict is not a bad thing if conducted in an adult-like, mature manner. Quite honestly, resolution, through conflict, is amazingly satisfying and rewarding when done well, but if most continue to rely on intimidating and degrading social media slander, the incidences of cyber-bullying and hurtful relationships will continue.

Communication is a choice! What does supper time look like for your family? Despite the busyness of homework, sports schedules, and other activities, are you able to protect family time? Can you and your kids still gather around the supper table to eat, talk, and listen, where you're looking at each other's eyes, not the backs of each other's phones?

Reading, Writing, and Arithmetic will always be the foundation of our academic curriculum, but it's time, through **Leader in Me** and other initiatives to improve our "people skills". Let's never lose the communicative skills of a firm, confident handshake, while at the same time welcoming an individual into a conversation with a smile and looking them in the eye. Find time this week to restore a relationship with a friend or family member over lunch or a good cup of coffee. You'll be glad you did!

Seek First to Understand!

Mr. Kermit E. Riehle, Superintendent
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