

To: Dr. Riggle, Superintendent
Dr. Williamson, Assistant Superintendent, Educational Services
Glenbrook High Schools District 225 Board of Education

From: Lauren Fagel, Principal

Re: Recommendation for Sabbatical

Date: May 8, 2017

Thank you for your consideration of the sabbatical proposal. I recommend that the Board of Education approve a first semester sabbatical leave for Danny Zapler, Social Studies teacher at Glenbrook South. The official dates of his leave would be August 21, 2017 through January 19, 2018. Mr. Zapler would return to his full teaching schedule on January 22, 2018.

Ms. Logan, Instructional Supervisor for Social Studies, and I have worked extensively with Danny on this proposal, and we fully support the project. We believe that Danny will make full use of his time for professional learning, and he will return to GBS with new ideas, insights, and strategies that will benefit student wellness in the academic classroom.

Sabbatical Proposal for the 2017-2018 School Year
Submitted by Danny Zapler

Background/Rationale

I am requesting a sabbatical leave for the first semester of the 2017-2018 school year. During my sabbatical, I will explore, analyze, evaluate, and learn from other competitive college preparatory high schools around the nation that have taken alternative and novel approaches to mitigate the student wellness crisis kids are facing.

Proposal

With a sabbatical semester, I can put my full efforts and passions into deepening my examination of the complex and multifaceted nature of what I believe is the single most pressing and troubling issue in education today. More importantly, I will be going beyond the literature to witness how other concerned professionals are solving the wellness crisis in real time.

By visiting other schools around the area and nation, I will be able to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the wellness problems we face, how they affect student learning and achievement, and which classroom strategies are most effective for authentically engaging high school students. I have spent so much of my professional life at GBS, and I welcome the opportunity to explore other schools to see wellness/academic issues from a radically divergent perspective.

I am interested in learning how teachers can alter their pedagogical practices in the classroom to ameliorate or even eliminate some of the wellness problems we are seeing in our students that crossover into the academic realm. I am not exploring how student services and mental health employees at schools address the wellness issue. I am only focusing on student wellness as it overlaps with academics.

Action Steps and Outcomes/Products

During the sabbatical semester, I aim to take the following action steps:

- Explore empirical research, school programs, systems, and processes that foster authentic student learning. Examples include journal articles, recent literature, strategies such as problem-based learning, project-based learning, school-within-a school models
- Visit, shadow, and participate in other school environments, both locally and nationally (see list of potential schools below)
- Meet twice during the sabbatical (in person or virtually) with Ms. Fagel, Ms. Logan, Mr. Muir, a member of the instructional coaching team, and a member of the student services department to “check” my findings with Glenbrook faculty members

Upon completion of the sabbatical, I aim to develop the following products to be ready to share throughout the second semester and at the start of the 2018-2019 school year:

- 60-minute digital media presentation that summarizes the empirical research, strategies for application and implementation of the research, and the major insights gleaned from the experience
- A resource toolkit that teachers can use as a starting point for strategy implementation in their own classrooms

The following groups and venues are possible audiences for these products:

- Social Studies Department and All Departments at GBS
- School-wide programs and events at GBS (freshman assemblies, late arrival days, support staff professional development)
- Glenbrook North, Glenbrook Evening School, and Glenbrook Off-Campus
- District Administrators
- Local groups of educators, such as Central Suburban League Principals Group, Local Social Studies Instructional Supervisor Group
- *The Oracle*, GBS TV, GBS radio
- Local and national Social Studies conferences (i.e. National Council for the Social Studies)

I feel confident that I will be able to improve my own teaching, knowledge base, and interactions with students. I also will have a lot more to offer other teachers and administrators. I will draft a plan to utilize my research, knowledge and experience to impact District 225, and I will work with district administrators to finalize the plan. Lastly, I will make myself available through the multiple channels of communication and professional development already in place at GBS upon my return.

List of Schools to Visit

- Midland School - Los Olivos, California - longer visit
- Illinois Math and Science Academy - Aurora, Illinois
- Intrinsic Charter School - Chicago, Illinois
- Model High School - Bloomfield Hills, Michigan
- New Tech High at Zion-Benton High School - Zion, Illinois
- Chicago High School for Agricultural Sciences - Chicago, Illinois

I envision developing a set of research-based strategies and recommendations that can be implemented at various tiers: by teachers in their individual classrooms, by course teams across the department, and by school leaders building-wide. I will also bring back my new knowledge and skills to the instructional coaches as they are well positioned to share the information with other teachers.

Background/Rationale

The primary motivation for my sabbatical request is driven by my desire to find solutions to a growing student wellness crisis. I have been saddened and frustrated by the decline I have witnessed in student wellness. I have seen the decline in student wellness at GBS and read broadly about the crisis nationally. While I am buoyed by our principal Lauren Fagel, our Superintendent Mike Riggle, and a school board that is obviously aware of and working on addressing the wellness issues we face, I want to deepen my understanding of the problem and do more to help.

To be clear, I must be candid about what I have seen change over the past twenty years at GBS. Most of my observations when shared with other educators are corroborated and there is also a growing body of research that supports my assertions. I have found that students are ***increasingly***: passive, fragile, anxious, disengaged, depressed, feeling like victims, distracted, materialistic, superficial, needy, irresponsible, and dependant ***while at the same time, decreasingly***: curious, physically fit, able to solve problems. I have been increasingly saddened and frustrated by what is happening to our students. Although many of the causes for the negative changes in our kids' lives go beyond the school and classroom, I believe there is a lot we as educators can do to help change the troubling trajectory adolescents are traveling.

Work Inspired:

- Brendtro, Larry. *Reclaiming Youth at Risk: Our Hope for the Future*. Place of Publication Not Identified, Solution Tree, 2005.
- Deresiewicz, William. *Excellent Sheep: The Miseducation of the American Elite and the Way to a Meaningful Life*. New York, NY: Free, 2014. Print.
- Gatto, John Taylor. *Dumbing Us Down: The Hidden Curriculum of Compulsory Schooling*. Gabriola Island, B.C.: New Society, 2002. Print.
- Kohn, Alfie. *Punished by Rewards: The Trouble with Gold Stars, Incentive Plans, A's, Praise, and Other Bribes*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1993. Print.
- Lythcott-Haims, Julie. *How to Raise an Adult: Break Free of the Overparenting Trap and Prepare Your Kid for Success*. New York: Henry Holt, 2015. Print.
- Levine, Madeline. *The Price of Privilege: How Parental Pressure and Material Advantage Are Creating a Generation of Disconnected and Unhappy Kids*. New York: HarperCollins, 2006. Print.
- Neill, Alexander Sutherland. *Summerhill: A Radical Approach to Child Rearing*. New York: Hart Pub., 1960. Print.
- Pink, Daniel H. *Drive: The Surprising Truth about What Motivates Us*. New York, NY: Riverhead, 2009. Print.
- Reel Link Films presents; a film by Vicki Abeles; directed by Vicki Abeles & Jessica Congdon. *Race To Nowhere*. Lafayette, CA :Reel Link Films, 2011. Print.

Work To Be Read:

- Ericsson, K. Anders. *Peak: Secrets from the New Science of Expertise*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2016. Print.
- Duckworth, Angela. *Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance*. New York, NY: Scribner, 2016. Print.
- Tyack, David B., and Larry Cuban. *Tinkering toward Utopia: A Century of Public School Reform*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1995. Print.