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“Evolution in the Workplace”

Growing up in a household with two parents as teachers I have seen them constantly adapt and change with their profession. As an eight year old child I can remember learning how to use the computer in computer class on “A” days while my parents would learn the same skills I was during their professional development in-services. The three of us were basically learning the same skills at the same time. I was learning how to use the computer so that I could keep up with modern times, and they were learning to use them more efficiently for their jobs. Flash forward nine years now and it was a new technology challenge they were facing, social media. They would ask me endless questions on what was different between a tweet and a post on someone’s wall. At the same time as these talks were going on with them peppering me about basic social media questions I was asking them questions. Mine were more specified toward how to build a good resume during college, or how to network. There is a give and take between the older generation and the newer generation of teachers coming into the system. The workplace will constantly evolve especially in the field of education, but at the same time certain interpersonal things will always be done better in person than over the phone.

From personal experience I have seen a push for the use of technology in the schools. For instance, last year my high school began to use laptops. A few select teachers were allotted lap tops to be given out to students for school work in class and at home. Prior to these students receiving laptops, these teachers followed the more traditional model of using textbooks and handwritten notes to help the students learn the material. For instance now teachers have the ability to put lectures onto slides on PowerPoint so that a more visual learner will not only hear it, but also see the words. Teachers now have to adapt their lesson plans to fit with the technology that they have available to them. At the same time some of this is also making a select few teachers become lazier as now they play movies instead of teaching the lesson. It allows for shortcuts to be taken by the teachers so that they do not have to put as much effort into teaching as in the past.

Scott Burd who has been a physical education teacher at Franklin High School for twenty-three years discussed the many changes he has seen. The first change he discussed with me was the changing of curriculum. For instance he said, “When I first started teaching the focus was more on getting people to simply move around for forty minutes every day. But then around thirteen years later the focus changed to a heavy focus on healthy exercise habits.” In health they have had to add the dangers of sexting and social media to the curriculum. Twenty years ago when he first started they only would teach human sexuality. Now he has to teach social media bullying and the introduction of safe dates, to help prevent dating violence.

As a coach Mr. Burd has noticed another significant shift as well. He noted that, “Athletes specialize more, there are less three star athletes, let alone two sport athletes.” Much of this shift has been because of the introduction of year round travel teams. These teams force a commitment to a single sport rather than being able to play a sport year round. Along with coaching responsibilities he noted, “Coaches are responsible for athlete’s academic performance where 20 years ago it was the kid and the parents (responsibility).” Back twenty years ago a coach never worried about the athlete’s grades it was left to the athlete to monitor their grades.

Also Mr.Burd noted that kids have become a,”Me first generation.” Much of this he has said is that many parents now baby their children, and do not force their children to earn rewards. Along with that he has noticed that parents are way more involved with their children’s lives. For instance he said, “Parents are now way more involved with even petty issues. I constantly receive emails about grades.” At his school they have instituted a program called Genesis, which allows parents to check their child’s grades at will. Many parents will check their grades daily. In the past the only times parents knew their child’s grades would be if they received a mid-quarter report, or if their child told them. Similar to Scott Burd, Susan Burd, another physical education teacher, has seen more issues with the ever so growing access to grades. She relayed the story of an angry mother back to me about how a mother, "though she was calling her daughter special Ed. Even though her daughter had only just been introduced to the skill." Mrs. Burd had simply stated that her daughter was approaching standards that would eventually be met in second grade. The child happened to only be in kindergarten at the time.The two of them similarly have to deal with the same issue twenty years ago they never really faced. Like they previously stated how twenty years ago grades were between the parent and student, it has now shifted to a teacher and parent relationship.

What Susan Burd has noticed that over the years as a teacher she has noticed that third graders and freshman in high school are very similar. Even though she only taught freshman for a year she noticed that freshman and third graders both try to act older than they are, and very immature. As for the involvement of parents in the primary sector of education, she has noticed a couple of changes. Parents nowadays she said will only, “show up for the fun stuff, like field trips, and will in turn miss conferences with teachers and back to school nights.” Back when she first started parents would do the complete opposite. They would rather miss the fieldtrips and take time off a work to go to conferences. I believe parents do this so they can be their child’s best friend, and not an authoritative figure who will show responsibilities they need to take.” Parents twenty years ago were more focused on the academic portion of school, and not the fun aspects. Parents were much more likely to skip the field trips, and to be punctual to every meeting whether it was a conference or PTA meeting.

On the contrary I feel that one thing will always stay the same in the education field. There will always be a kid first initiative. Technology and people may change, but teachers will always be there to teach the kids. They will always be there to lend a helping hand to a student who needs it. To be a student’s role model, or to be their confidant when they are truly in need of one. At the end of the day teachers will be there for every one of their students and that is why teachings core values will never change. As long as there are students there will be teachers ready to teach them.

Teaching has changed over the past twenty years. This is a definite realization I have come too. Many teachers have seen curriculums altered to fit the times, while also seeing the students mindsets change. Parents are highly more involved with the student’s grades, but less with actual face to face meetings. Education will evolve with technology, and will also have to evolve how they teach life skills with technology. Working in this environment will always face new hurdles that will come from the evolution of society.

Works Cited

Burd, Susan. Personal interview. 10 October 2013

Burd, Scott. Personal Interview. 10 October 2013