

October 2021

MWA Chief Executive Officer Report

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Core Values Connection

Last week, our 15Five check-in question was “Which of our core values is being challenged for you right now?” Of the five core values, the value that was chosen among the executive team is **Community**. While the remaining four core values of *Responsibility*, *Respect*, *Resilience*, and *Scholarship* are all applicable in some way as potential challenges, it is interesting that we chose community.

15Five is a tool that allows us to share the following as individuals and allows supervisors of varying levels to review the following self-reported information:

- **“Pulse checks”** (generally how you are doing on a scale of 1-5)
- **OKR updates** (Objectives and Key Results)
- **Priorities for the week**
- **Questions** – a set of rotating questions we respond to weekly – e.g. *What’s your biggest challenge right now? What accomplishments are you most proud of?*

Currently, maintaining a sense of community is one of the biggest challenges, by far. At Making Waves, I think we see ourselves as “unique” and less susceptible to the various ways schools have shown themselves to be challenged this year. Articles have been shared with the community about what is going in schools with students and teachers, both nationally and locally. Despite evidence that the social-emotional challenges students are facing is a wide-spread issue, as well as the difficulties in hiring and retaining staff, there is belief among some that our retention challenges are mostly self-inflicted issues. We continue to try to learn more about the various external forces and internal challenges that are contributing to staffing challenges and low morale of some.

We all want to be great in showing up for our students and giving them what they need, and it is hard to accept that our best efforts last year, and even two years ago, may be different now. All of the adults are not 100%, for a variety of reasons in “recovering” from the last 18 months, and neither are the students, generally speaking. The duress caused by the current conditions is showing our areas of growth in the areas of supervision, communication, and organization. On the second page, I share some of the things we are doing to address it.

Key Highlights to Start the Year

- Nearly all students and staff are adhering to the masking expectations
- Arrival is going so much better with nearly all families/students adhering to the drop-off expectations
- Dismissal continues to be a challenge with students and parents engaging in unsafe actions to avoid going through the dismissal line (the majority are following pick-up expectations)
- This is the mid-semester point (we are nearly 1/5 of the way through the school year in instructional days)
- Talent continues to make new hires with people joining weekly (avg. of 1-2 each week for past 4 weeks)
- Operations team members continue to try to address various facility issues popping up
- Vandalism increased this year at new levels than in previous years
- We closed the school for three days due to inadequate staffing
- At the time of writing this report I was awaiting a response regarding an Op-Ed I submitted re: K-12 educ.

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Mitigations & Approaches

Going into this school year, we wanted to do to be more responsive to challenges based on feedback last school year. We are applying some of those lessons while also trying additional approaches. Some of these approaches are successful and others are still not quite having their intended impact, despite the intention.

- Starting during August Training, we had functional areas such as Operations, HR, and IT create “office hours” where staff could come to ask any questions related to these topics.
- I hosted a CEO open session with staff to allow for asking questions and raising concerns.
- I sent out a staff survey asking for feedback and a rating for their sense of the launch of the school year and their sense of safety. I shared the results of the survey back with staff and with the Board Pres.
- Dr. Ward-Jackson created a “task force” to discuss various pain points and provide input on solutions. Those solutions were discussed with Ms. Stillwell, Ms. Martinez, and I. We agreed on which items to move forward with – e.g. sustainability Fridays and a staff barbecue (with mitigations).
- Created staff space during the days school was closed to allow for sharing concerns and suggestions. Once concern that surfaced was the sense of isolation some are feeling in their buildings and classrooms due to the precautions were taking to limit the number of people meeting at one time and in what spaces. In response, I led a staff activity one morning outside on the turf field and we provided new guidelines that allow for more than 2 people to meet with one another indoors and outside.
- Proposed COVID bonuses for all staff to the Finance Advisory Committee and MWA Board.

My Continued Areas of Focus

This year, I am intentionally doing a few things to try to better understand and respond to the experiences of our stakeholders. These activities and priorities include:

- Arrival support for drop-off at the middle school & walking the campus until the start of 1st period
- Reserving time in my schedule to visit classrooms, and check in with staff.
- Requesting and responding to requests for 1:1 meetings with staff
- Reviewing daily data on staff completing the daily screening app questionnaire and signing in
- Meeting with leadership often to discuss staffing vacancies and efforts to mitigate the impact of them
- Reviewing and monitoring average daily attendance for students
- Reviewing and monitoring staff attendance
- Working with MWA and Making Waves Foundation leadership on developing a “scope and sequence” framework for college access education for 5th-12th grades.

Goals & Updates for 2021-22 (Updates shared at DEC meeting)

Goal #1

Develop a core instructional approach that is consistent with the core identity of MWA’s past and provides forward-looking approaches that are responsive to more current and future teaching and learning challenges and opportunities.

Goal #2

Apply some of the recommendations of the Cal Berkeley Board Fellows in the area of further capturing and systemizing program and teaching innovation through a consistent “test and learn” approach.

Goal #3

Assess MWA programs to assess resource allocation levels for the near and medium term to support long term financial sustainability.