

The first faculty meeting of the school year at the Harkness Career Center for Erie 1 BOCES was conducted on August 28, 2024. The agenda for this meeting included the following topics: New Staff, Fish!, Survey Results, Building Updates, Support Services, Fire/Lockdown Drills, Internal Calendar, Lesson Grid, Communication, Artificial Intelligence, Annual Acknowledgements, and Words of Wisdom / Open Dialogue. The main idea for the Faculty Meeting was to present the changes in procedure in relation to NYS Education expectations and building wide initiatives. Faculty meetings happen in the building monthly, typically after school on the third Tuesday and last 15-20 minutes. Since this was the first meeting of the new school year with more than the average information to deliver to faculty, the meeting lasted 75 minutes.

At the Harkness Center with Erie 1 BOCES, curricular and instructional initiatives are worked on through staff development days. Mostly never at faculty meetings. I work in the Career and Technical Education Division where we all come from the trades with different specializations using different teaching methods to assist high school students to master a trade. The curriculum of our programs is developed by departments through industry and collegiate recommendations to prepare students for business and industry. Then the curriculum is approved every five years through a Re-Approval process with NYS Education. Methods used to teach student the skills needed for the trades is individual to the program therefore not discussed at Faculty Meetings but through Department Meetings at Staff Development. When there is a change in expected lesson plan format or observation practices, these would be talked about at a faculty meeting as this would affect all in the building. For this beginning of the school year meeting, about 20 minutes was dedicated to updates on Lesson Plan structure through the Lesson Grid section of the agenda. In addition, Artificial Intelligence was touched on how we can use it

to simplify teaching lessons and presentation of information to students. However, it was a just a brief overview and announcing future training and committee groups would be formed.

Building updates and new staff announcements took about 15 minutes where we welcomed first year CTE teachers and learned about classrooms and programs that were moved over the summer. Updates to the exterior of the school grounds were completed this summer with parking lot reorganization. Once new parking expectations were discussed, a thank you was given to the custodial staff for getting the building prepared for students and staff to arrive beginning last week of August. Other years this section of the agenda has been lengthier due to capital projects and discussing how to accommodate certain classrooms in different wings depending on where the construction projects were happening. However, this year, changes were only made to the grounds not taking up too much time of the meeting. With new requirements from NYSED for notifying parents of fire and lockdown drills, time was also spent explaining the Robo Call System delivering these messages. We were asked to communicate with the office staff if we did not receive the test calls.

A new addition to the kick off of the school year was the Survey Results section of the agenda. Our new Assistant Principal created a survey that was sent out to staff checking in on the culture of the building to see how staff feels about topics like equality, feeling safe, feeling heard and supported. I was excited to see time dedicated to culture as these parallels to classes in the LIFTS program curriculum lessons. She was really taking the time to see where we are at to gauge the level of need for restructuring if needed to build a better school culture. The down side of this was only 35% of the staff complete the survey and almost 100% of the replies agreed the culture in our building is equal and all are represented and the administrators are approachable. I know this isn't true from being the support person, for many coworkers. I am not a Union

Representative which means many come to me because they do not want to stir up the Union and are just looking for a sounding board. The “Fish!” section of the agenda fit right into the “Survey Result” section cleverly offering us Goldfish Crackers saying is “O-Fish-ally” back to school. It was a cute reference and added a light hearted moment in the meeting. Between the survey and the Goldfish Crackers, I feel our new Assistant Principal is trying to improve the culture here and opened up the discussion as a group about being culturally responsive to our community. This was not at all directed to students but after the meeting teachers talked casually about using this type of practice in our classrooms while others laughed it off saying that was a ridiculous activity.

Our principal stepped in offering a focus on initiatives in the building for ordering procedures with a new staff member in this position and the welcoming of another new Assistant Principal who is a veteran in this position but from another CTE Center. It was made clear through the principal’s authoritative style that we are to use the new folks in these positions the same as we have in prior years with individuals, we were more comfortable with. Through the final agenda item, “Words of Wisdom”, the principal left us with words from a published work about the difference we make in students’ lives. It talked about how we can shift the day of a student by making sure they know we care. While he has an authoritative style, our principal is also transformational and laissez-faire. Throughout the meeting he joked with faculty and staff lightening the mood in the room reflecting his style of don’t be too serious but other moments he was authoritative where necessary and as always, transformative in the end bringing us back to why we teach. I find our principal, Mr. Wodjeski to be an inspiring leader adapting to the many personalities in the building within his staff and students. Along with our Superintendent, Dr. Michael Capuana, Mrs. Simone Klubek, Principal at Calspan, and Mr. Wodjeski these raw the

individuals that inspired me to enroll in the LIFTS program to complete my Educational Leadership career goal. I have been a part of the staff for all three as building administrators and have learned from their leadership styles as well.