

UASSP Administrative Spotlight – South Sevier Middle School

At South Sevier Middle School, Principal Michelle Nielsen knows the name of every student and staff member by the end of the first week of school. They live by the theme “Real Rams Show PRIDE,” which stands for Personal Responsibility, Respect, Integrity, Discipline, and Engagement. Every teacher and staff member utilize the *Positive Office Referral Card System* to celebrate the success of students by sending them to the principal’s office to receive a gift and an opportunity to sign the Poster of Fame! At SSMS, students want to be sent to the principal’s office.

In her own words, Michelle explains both the *Chase Learning Not Points* and the *me2we* programs at South Sevier Middle School:

Learn. Master. Explore.

This is the catchphrase we use to talk about our chase learning not points philosophy. Students learn the objectives, demonstrate mastery (try and try again until they get there through tiered interventions and supports), and then gain access to what we call explore courses. Regardless of whether a student is in need of academic interventions or not, all students are able to participate in one class period of explore courses. Those not needing intervention time gain access to two periods of explore time. Explore courses are 3-week courses that provide students with small tastes of a variety of learning opportunities. The 3-week sessions come and go in a blink of an eye leaving students looking forward to their new explore experience or anxiously waiting for part two of the explore course they totally loved. Examples of explore courses include crochet, cross stitching, drama, sign language, line dancing, newscasting, calligraphy, yoga, water coloring, math team, beginning piano, coaching, social media management, and so, so much more. The combination of teaching the students the importance of chasing the learning and mastery of skills and then gaining access to explore courses has been a game-changing experience for teachers and students alike.

me2we

me2we is a character education program I actually started developing while a teacher at SSMS. The philosophy of me2we is to help teach students the importance of shifting their mindset from me, me, me to instead being aware of others, showing kindness, and recognizing the power of unity and teamwork (we). With what started as an elective class idea and project we are now running a full-scale character education program based very specifically on the needs of our current student body. We have monthly themes that are helping us "build a stronger me" that in turn support our Real Ram behaviors, help build self-confidence, which in turn help build an understanding of the habits of tolerance, understanding, and kindness. Every lesson, activity, theme, etc. is a preventative effort for personal mental and emotional health that helps improve the mental and emotional health of the school as a combined group. Preventative efforts rather than reactive efforts to mental health crises is absolutely crucial and something we have been very effective in through our me2we program.

Thanks for all that you do for the students at South Sevier Middle School Principal Nielsen!