

## Episode 52 - Happy School Program - Steve Francis

#052 - Are you looking for different ways to improve staff morale at your school? Are you looking for different ways to improve your work-life balance? Then my guest in this episode might be just what you need! Steve Francis developed the Happy School program, a paid program where you can receive a one-page article every week, giving you tips and advice on different topics, that can help you in your teaching and improve your well being. In this episode we talk about how the Happy School program came about and how we can build high staff morale within our school.

Steve is from Townsville, QLD, Australia. He is Primary trained and went to James Cook University. Steve has worked for 20 years as a teaching principal in small and large schools in Australia and Hong Kong.

Steve did his Masters in Teacher Stress and from this was born the idea of the Happy School program. He would write a 1 page article on tips and strategies, on how to help teachers on varying topics. It has been running now for 9 years. Steve writes half the articles, while other professionals write the other half.

Steve has seen so much teacher burnout. He puts it down to teaching being such a people's profession. Stress comes from expectations from staff, teachers themselves and parents, curriculum to be covered, as well as challenging behaviour.

When staff are under stress, they will go into survival mode and only do the bare essentials. What is left out is often what keeps us happy e.g. fun things that attracted you to teaching in the first place.

Other tips that can help teachers

- Because teachers play a long game, think of 1 thing that you can get done by the end of the day so you feel like you are getting traction and getting ahead
- Positive leadership
- Have those people connections
- Pareto principle - 80/20 rule - 80% of results with 20% of time / activities
- Attitudes are contagious
- Live the reputation you want to have

Project Well Being is a program that Steve developed due to COVID and lockdown. It focuses on staff morale which involves 2 things -

1. empowering staff to make good choices around their well being, and
2. promote a school culture that allows people to do their best work.

Steve suggests we should be aiming for work-life satisfaction not work-life balance.

Staff and leaders should be having little deposits in the bank often, eg choc heart on Valentines Day, Easter egg at Easter, card on World Teachers' Day.

Teamwork should make our life easier, more efficient and more effective. With team work there needs to be consistency of good practice (every child deserves good practice / teaching equally).

Increasing staff morale takes time. The fastest way though is to find out what staff want through surveys, try and fix what you can, and acknowledge you have heard the rest because you can't fix everything. The staff room may or may not be a place to congregate for positive interactions.