

One Member's Voice

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Mentors of Mount Rushmore

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Charlie Monk was a legendary country music figure prominently known as "the mayor of music row" (Anderson, 2022). He recently passed away at 84 having spent over six decades in broadcasting, songwriting and publishing. His life's work is more than memorialized across his chosen career field. To many, he is one of their *Mentors of Mount Rushmore* as stated on Sirius XM's *The Highway*. As educational leaders we all have our own *Mentors of Mount Rushmore*. While our mountains may look quite different in comparison, it is certain that similarities would exist. The commonalities we find in those who are assembled on our mountain share similar attributes of loyalty, trust, integrity and collegiality.

As educators, we must take the time to thank, memorialize and recognize the many people who have had a positive impact upon our lives, career progression, profession, family and life. Why is it so easy to find faults in those with whom we have associated, yet difficult to recognize their positive attributes? And why is it so challenging to take a miniscule amount of time to show appreciation to those who have helped shape us into the school leaders we are today? Sometimes we underestimate the power of positive praise and simple recognition. It is usually free of charge, costing us only a bit of time. Through the use of social media, we can easily share how those who helped us along the way have positively impacted our lives as professionals. This is *work* that is not listed in our job description, on our Google calendar or on our daily to-do list. However, recognizing past mentors can be considered some of the most crucial work in our field.

As we have all seen in recent years under the leadership of our past presidents, one of the initiatives of the Pennsylvania Principals Association is the recognition of members who are doing great things (Ross, 2020). Our goal this year continues to be to try to make positive connections with our many staff members.

If you come across a stakeholder whom you believe may be difficult to connect or to establish a relationship with, that is all the more reason to spend the time and sweat equity to ensure you are making a connection. Connections and relationships propel us through years of work, not days. The long and hard days are endurable due to the importance of those relationships and the people we meet along the way. Remembering your "why" is perhaps the single most important thing you can do as an educational leader. Losing sight of your "why" is a dangerous proposition.

Dr. Joe Sanfelippo, superintendent of Fall Creek School District in Fall Creek, Wisconsin, and renowned keynote speaker, presented at the Pennsylvania Educational Leadership Summit in August 2019. He often states in his many keynote presentations that "*We are in this thing together*" (Sanfelippo, 2019). With the many challenges that we have faced into 2020 and beyond, this is ever so true. We, as educational leaders, set the tone for our building and our departments. Beyond trying contractual negotiations, beyond trying legal situations, and beyond the day-to-day dealings of the inner workings of a school, we are all commonly bonded by our own school's vision and mission and also the general desire to see

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children succeed, learn, grow and ultimately earn a high school diploma.

Recently, we had the opportunity to present to our alma mater and the outgoing fall 2022 class of student teachers at Slippery Rock University of Pennsylvania. Having both graduated in the spring of 2009, this opportunity generated many memories of those who inspired us in our careers. While the campus has certainly changed, many of the same amazing people remain. We are thankful for these impactful professionals who have helped shape and form who we are as educational leaders. They have had a profound impact on the work we do, the way we do it and the relationships that we cultivate...these are some of the faces on our Mount Rushmore.

Wherever they are, whoever they are, whatever they do, it only takes a few minutes to call, send a text, an email, or a message to thank those who have helped you along the way. As the years go by, you will find that those correspon-

dences will be circulating back to you from those whom you have helped and shaped over the years. The work we do is critical and ever so important for the continued success of the students and future of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Regardless of your school type, location, or design, we thank you for having an impact on the future.

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How a High School on Block Scheduling Can Help Solves Staff Shortages

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