

August 27, 2007

To school principals considering the Segue Program:

When I was principal at Ventura High School Jerry Beckerman approached me about a program he was working on that would bring speakers from the community into the schools and talk with the students about the speakers' career. One component that really appealed to me was that the "speech" was not going to be didactic from a moralizing viewpoint, but rather strictly educational; the speakers would tell the students how they got to the point where they were then in their careers, what helped them get there, and what pitfalls they experienced. The speakers would not tell the students what they had to do or lecture them in any way. And, there would be a chance for the students to ask questions.

Segue and the advisory team developed a really effective way to make this happen. I did not want the teachers to be required to do all the scheduling for venue, number of speakers, speaking time and class period. If the program was going to work, it had to be almost transparent to the administration, to the clerical staff and to the teachers. Jerry's answer, and the system that works still today, is very effective and efficient. The speaker logs into Segue and signs up to be a speaker. The speaker is presented with options of available times and school locations. The speaker walks into the administrative offices, announces that s-he is "here" and then is taken or directed to the teacher. It is a pretty slick and transparent way of making the program work and work well. We had a few, minor bumps in the road – mostly scheduling issues, but the bumps are smoothed out and the program is working flawlessly. The administrative staff may be involved if they want to be, sometimes walking a speaker to the class, or going to the class to hear a speaker, but it is not required. There is no additional administrative or clerical load and the teacher has control over which class periods and the frequency of speakers. Because of its efficiency and because the students really like and benefit from the speakers, more teachers have signed up and continue to elect into the program. As a result, more students are able to hear more speakers.

For administrators who may fear that "this is just one more thing to do," I can say that it is effortless, seamless and very transparent for them. For administrators who worry that this will be more work for the clerical staff, they can dismiss that concern; there is almost nothing for the clerical staff to do, short of giving the master schedule to the Segue programmer at the beginning of the term, and then having the speakers sign in and giving them a name badge. For the teachers who might fear more work in terms of preparing for the speaker, there is no more work: the speaker comes prepared, knows the time-frame, and has a clear direction of what needs to be done. It is very enjoyable for all concerned. Segue is really a refined, effective and successful program.

Sincerely,

Larry Emrich  
Principal of Ventura High School  
1997-2006