

Polson School District #23
Office of the Superintendent

“Helping Students SHINE in Polson Schools”

Colleagues:

One of the Board’s Goals is to become a “**LIGHTHOUSE**” District of excellence in Montana. If you think about the purpose of a **LIGHTHOUSE**—it is to **SHINE** a light in a storm to lead boats safely to land; it also can **SHINE** a light on rocks that could potentially shipwreck or capsize a boat; or **SHINE** a light pointing to a potential safe docking area.

In applying the analogy of **LIGHTHOUSE** to our District, it is my goal that we enable **ALL** students to **SHINE**—to “ignite” their capacity to become peak performers. Edward Hallowell, author of the book **SHINE** indicates that we all serve an important role in helping each student **SHINE—to BECOME PEAK PERFORMERS**.

Hallowell identified a pathway in which our students and we can become **PEAK PERFORMERS**. However, we must create the kind of conditions in our school setting that will bring out the best in us and our students so they will want to excel.

1. The first step is to **SELECT: All students have talent**. Find something that students are good at and help them to recognize their gifts or talents “so their brains light up.” Hallowell or Dr. SHINE says that “Everyone has got that spark in them somewhere.” Help students to find themselves—to believe they can achieve—even with the most difficult of concepts and skills.
2. The second step is to **CONNECT: Cultivate the Human Moment**—what Hallowell calls the other **Vitamin C=CONNECT**—Brain research indicates that connecting to people makes you smarter, healthier and more productive—being alone for extended periods of time reduces your mental processes. In this age of electronic super connectivity we have grown emotionally disconnected from each other. Our students with all of the electronic devices today desperately need to connect with us face to face even more today. “A positively connected work environment in which students feel understood and safe to be authentic is critical for students to do their best.” “Positive emotions create superior performance.” One of the best ways I know how to make students feel connected is to greet your students at the classroom door. Our focus--Professional Learning Communities is so that we also **CONNECT** face to face.
3. The third step is **PLAY: Create activities in which a student’s imagination gets involved**. Learning is fun and engages our creative minds toward creative results. It involves creative problem solving. It is a catalyst to peak performance.

4. The fourth step is **GRAPPLE AND GROW**: This step follows play where **a student gets into a task** fueled by the feeling to work hard because it is fun and challenging. Understandably there is drudgery with learning. However, if you have created the positive conditions of **SELECT, CONNECT and PLAY** in your classroom, these tasks will be easier for students. They will gain **MASTERY**—making progress toward a task that brings a sense of well-being and accomplishment that is recognized.

5. The fifth step is to **SHINE**: **SHINE is what happens when students work hard and advance**. Students gain recognition which affirms that what they have done is valuable. Students experience tremendous satisfaction (and I might add teachers also). Students who shine want to keep shining—they are motivated—they feel connected to us and to our schools—they become peak performers and continue to **SHINE**.

What specifically are we doing to help students become peak performers? I challenge you to make a meaningful first impression on students the first day of class and to set the tone for helping students becoming peak performers this year.

Have a terrific school year as we enable students to **SHINE!**

Dr. Linda E. Reksten
Superintendent

(Excerpts taken from **SHINE** by Edward M. Hallowell, MD: Harvard Business Review Press, 2011)