

Amber Clark – Initiative Narrative

Once upon a time, in a galaxy far, far away, there lived a brave Princess. Now, this was no ordinary Princess. No, this princess was fierce and passionate. She had made it her quest to empower her students and raise their achievement through “Increasing Parent Involvement at EMS.” This was a very difficult quest, but one that the Princess thought was very important. You see, the Princess, being very wise and very experienced in the ways of the young middle schooler, knew that they could be little tricksters who did not always tell their parents the truth. This caused a lot of hardship at school, and the Princess wanted to assist parents and involve them more in their children’s lives. She also wanted teachers to feel more supported. She knew, through years of experience and research, that parents often felt very powerless, and wanted to be more involved, but didn’t know how – which is where the Princess came in.

The Princess’s vision was a school where parents felt welcome and where teachers and parents were part of a team whose major goal was open communication. So the Princess recruited other teachers who felt the same way, and the first meeting was held. More meetings were held, and many ideas were discussed – ideas like a Parent-Teacher Association, home-room parents, parent volunteers and guest speakers, a parent reading program, parent tours and walkbys – just to name a few. These were very lofty plans, and the princess knew she couldn’t do them on her own. For the princess was just a princess, and she did not have the power or influence to accomplish these goals. So she and her mighty committee appealed to the neighboring Kings and Queens, asking for their blessing and support, which they readily gave. Sadly, when the time came to rebel against the Empire – the Emperor Status Quo, and his Sith Lord Darth Micromanagement, the Kings and Queens were unable to offer anything other than words. Many of the committee’s great ideas never made it off the planning paper.

But the princess and her committee was not to be stopped. She continued to hold her meetings, and continued to try and garner support for her initiative. She emailed parents regular updates, and encouraged her colleagues to do the same. The princess also opened her markbook to parents online. She experienced great success with her parents, and her parents were very happy. However, she felt very alone; for although the princess tried to encourage others to do the same thing, the going was very slow, and few others – even in her committee – followed her. The barriers, the dreaded and ghastly iSAMS system, accompanied by other hurdles made it very daunting to send out mass emails and few were up to jumping through so many hoops. A few of her committee members persevered and sent out parent emails, but few chose to open their marks online. The Empire, and the dark side were very powerful, and very difficult to defeat, but the princess continued to try.

Then disaster struck. Her mentor left to run her own Kingship in the Land of Al Khor, and the princess lost several of her committee members. Never one to give up, the Princess recruited more members, and found a new mentor, but everything seemed to take so long. The Princess often felt very discouraged; it seemed like it was one challenge after another. Because of all the bureaucracy and red tape, many of her committee’s ideas were never implemented and many of their suggestions fell on deaf ears. For example, her committee had worked so hard to create email guidelines, only to have those “EMS Email Guidelines” ignored. All were dis-heartened and despondent until one day, the

princess was summoned by the Lady Amal. Her lady informed the princess that there had been a mix-up, and the “EMS Email Guidelines”, which were to be released in the EMS Staff/Faculty Handbook, had been accidentally left out and not ignored. The princess was delighted with this news, and rushed back to spread these glad tidings with her committee. The grand unveiling of the “EMS Email Guidelines” occurred in the local Kingdom Flashette. The committee rejoiced – their first real victory over the Empire. Sadly, this was to be the only victory that the committee would achieve.

Many challenges – including conflicting priorities, limited time and resources, a very small sandbox, and of course the dreaded Emperor Status Quo and Darth Micromanagement – all took their toll, and the princess decided that her energy was better spent focusing on her own little kingdom of C10, instead of the big EMS community. She continues to send out her emails, and her marks are still online. Her students’ parents continue to shower her with kind words and words of thanks, but the princess has decided that in this land of EMS, the Empire and the dark side reign supreme. The princess still believes in her vision, and she continues to use it in her own kingdom, but perhaps the biggest lesson that the princess has learned as a leader is when to stop fighting. In fact, if the princess had to choose one overarching theme of leadership, it would be knowing when to quit. It is as the age old proverb goes – you can lead a Tauntaun to water, but you can’t make it drink. Sometimes one just needs to strategically retreat and regroup. As a leader, the princess has also learned the importance of the decision making sandbox. Great ideas will only remain great ideas unless someone in the sandbox makes it so. It is essential to focus on those areas that one has control over. Lastly, the princess learned the importance of being realistic – of a situation and of what people are able to give. Being realistic enables one to focus their energy where it will be the most effective. These were perhaps not the lessons of leadership that the princess wanted to learn, but lessons that she needed to learn.