10-4

Coffee with Molly

REFLECTION AND DEBRIEFING

As the school year wraps up, many people breathe a sigh of relief, filled with anticipation for vacations and much-deserved time off. Interestingly, the conclusion of the year can be just as, if not more, frantic than the beginning! If you haven't had the chance to work in a central office within an educational system, you've truly missed out on something remarkable. While schools may close for summer or operate limited summer programs, central offices function year-round.

As you prepare for the summer, whether it is attending local professional development sessions or just planning for the 2026-2027 year, it is a great time to take an hour to reflect and debrief this past year. This is not a formal debrief session that needs to be shared with your higher ups, this is a reflection that can be used by you to plan for next year and beyond.

Consider these questions for reflection:

1. What was our greatest success this school year?
2. How do our statistics look? Number of students served, routes or miles accomplished, number of new employees or retirees, mechanical issues and finally accidents reported.
3. What was your greatest challenge this year? How would you define it? What made it a challenge? How did we address it? What could we do to mitigate this in the future?
4. How was your leadership this year? What did you excel at? What do you need to do more or less of? How can you serve your team better?
5. What changes do you see coming next year? What can you do to prepare for those challenges?
6. How is your team? Who needs help or acknowledgement? What can you do to help them prepare for next year?
7. How was your time management, people management, office management? What works and what needs improvement?
8. Have you shared your successes with your team and your supervisors?

Now these eight questions are designed to get you started. You can use some of none and create your own debrief. If you have time, bring your colleagues in for their input as well. This exercise is not about compliance, but about reflection.

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For those military veterans in NAPT, you may have participated in mission or action debriefings before. The idea is to be honest, clearly and with great care to explore the event. What worked, what didn't, what resources were used or were also needed, who did what and how did it all work. The idea is not to pat ourselves on the back, but to learn to get better at every opportunity.

This concept has been a regular part of my professional life for over 20- years. I tend to do it following meetings, exchanges, or events. It can be as simple as me writing out my thoughts to involving others in the process. I like to think of it as deep thinking! It helps me clarify my decisions and plans and learn from every event.

Last Friday, rather than taking an evening flight as planned, I was notified early that my flight was cancelled and I needed to make other arrangements. My day shifted at six am. All of my efforts were directed at trying to rebook and to get home in a timely manner. It involved a quick exit from my hotel, multiple flights, a missing cell phone and additional charges! It also meant that my return home went from one day to the next. As inconvenient as it was, it gave me several unplanned hours to think!

My choice was not to be frustrated and angry over a circumstance I could not control. My choice weas to address the situation, find resolutions and deal with it. Much like your choices every day! We choose how we approach, address and react to our circumstances!

I choose to use two hours of what I called "stuck time" to do reflection and debrief from the previous week and events. I used what I was handed and tried to maximize my time! I am not going to lie, having no cell phone or internet connection helped! It was just me and my legal pad!

How about you? Do you take time to reflect and debrief? When was the last time that you had uninterrupted thought time?