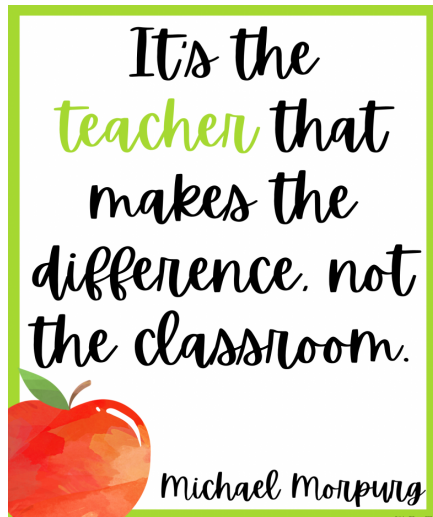


## Effective Strategies for Boosting Teacher Morale: A module in context of schools in Ladakh

It's time we talk about teachers. It's unfortunate to see how teachers show a serious dissatisfaction in their profession. There are many factors responsible, when we talk of a decline in teacher's morale which includes low pay, work load and unruly students to name some.



### What is the Teacher Morale?

Morale can be defined as the professional interest and enthusiasm a person displays towards the achievement of individual and group goals in a given job situation (Bentley & Rempel, 1980). When a healthy school environment exists and teacher morale is high, "teachers feel good about each other and, at the same time, feel a sense of accomplishment from their jobs" (Hoy and Miskel, 1987).

### WHY PRIORITIZE IT? Importance of Making Teacher Morale a Priority

All children deserve a high quality education, and a high quality education starts with an excellent teacher in every classroom. Children learn best through a passionate, skilled instructor. If you are to retain your best teachers performing at the highest level, they must feel satisfied with their jobs. Teacher morale has dropped as the COVID-19 pandemic continues. Surveys by EdWeek Research Center document the decline in teachers' spirits. In its March 25, 2020, survey, 63 percent of teachers reported that teacher morale was lower than before the pandemic. By April 8th it rose to 69 percent and by May 7th 72 percent.

Let's scroll through the points below and check if we ever take time for our teachers in boosting their morale and making them feel important in our schools.

1. Leave handwritten notes to teachers telling them how much you **appreciate** them.
2. Give teachers a day off to celebrate their birthday.
3. Allow teachers to **showcase their strengths** by modeling during faculty meetings.
4. **Support** your teachers when parents complain about them.
5. Implement a casual Friday dress code for teachers.
6. Organize some volunteers to cover teacher duties a couple of times a year to provide teachers with an extra break.
7. Back the teachers 100% when it comes to a student discipline referral.
8. Offer **continuous feedback**, support, and guidance for teacher improvement.
9. Initiate a potluck luncheon for teachers one time per month.
10. Email or Whatsapp words of **encouragement** or wisdom now and then.
11. Spread out extra duties evenly. Don't put too much on a single teacher.
12. Brag about your teachers anytime the opportunity presents itself.
13. Organize an over the top **Teacher Appreciation Week** full of goodies and surprises for the teachers.
14. Provide them bonuses on festive occasions.
15. Provide **meaningful professional development** that is not a waste of their time.
16. Follow through on any promises that you make.
17. Provide them with the **best resources and teaching tools** that are available.
18. Keep their **technology up-to-date** and working at all times.
19. Provide them with a **terrific teacher's lounge/workroom** with lots of extra comforts.
20. Fill instructional material requests through any means if the teacher believes it will benefit their students.

21. **Encourage creativity** and embrace teachers who think outside the box.
22. Do not dismiss any concern that a teacher may have. Follow through with checking into it and always let them know how you handled it.
23. Offer to **mediate** any conflicts a teacher may have with another teacher.
24. Go out of your way to offer encouragement when you know a teacher is struggling either personally or professionally.
25. Give teachers **decision-making opportunities** in the school by allowing them to come up with their viewpoints and suggestions.
26. Work with the teachers, not against them.
27. Host a **celebration** at the end of the school year.
28. Have an **open door policy**. Encourage teachers to bring their ideas and suggestions to you. Implement the suggestions you believe will benefit the school.
29. Provide your **Teacher of the Year** a meaningful prize.
30. Keep drinks (soda, water, juice) and snacks (fruit, candy, chips) in stock in the teacher lounge or workroom.
31. **Coordinate** a teacher vs. parent basketball or volleyball game.
32. Treat each teacher with **respect**. Never talk down to them. Never question their authority in front of a parent, student, or another teacher.
33. Take an interest in their personal lives learning about their spouse, kids, and interests outside of school.
34. Let teachers be individuals. **Embrace differences**.
35. Provide teachers the time to **collaborate with each other** on a weekly basis.
36. **Ask their opinion! Listen to their opinion! Value their opinion!**



If we pick up the bold words from the above mentioned points, it's surprising to see that we quote these words to students only. Never thought of applying the same to a teacher.

With each passing year, the demands of the job are increasing and changing drastically. Administrators have no choice but to make a conscious effort when it comes to examining, maintaining and boosting teacher morale.

## Teacher Morale in Context of Ladakh

Teaching is demanding, even on the best of days. On the worst of days, teaching is just exhausting. Demanding, exhausting will be with all teachers, whether not as qualified, lack the experience or even for the most experienced educator, teacher burnout is real. It is true for the teachers serving here in Ladakh as well. Apart from the common challenges faced in other states, teachers here have to be ever ready to serve at the farthest areas which are:

- 1.rugged
- 2.harsh climatic conditions
- 3.minimum basic amenities

Working in these areas causes serious health hazards which could sometimes be life threatening. Over the years, there have been a lot of serious depression cases as well.

Fixing the issue might go beyond your hands. Even partially mending the issue requires more than a single action. However, creating an environment of high retention and boosting morale is key to keeping our teachers happy and excited about their work.

### **Be an example! Stay happy, positive, and enthusiastic!**

With this mantra teachers move forward and make a huge difference in our children's lives.

## Here are 9 ways you can boost teacher morale

### 1/ Meet Teachers Personal Needs

A good administrator is the one who understands that educators too have a range of needs to be successful. You take responsibility for knowing when a teacher needs help and helping them find the resources to assist them. This assistance could be anywhere



from a new teacher who may be struggling and needs some guidance from a senior teacher who is burnt out or needs to catch up on paperwork. As the leader, you can help your teachers out in more ways than one. All it requires is knowing what they need to succeed.

## 2/ Celebrate Successes

*“A person who feels appreciated will always do more than what is expected.”*

The quote above sums up exactly why an administrator need to be celebrating your staff's successes. Nothing boosts teacher morale more than the recognition of their work. It doesn't have to be grand gestures of appreciation. Small recognition for daily tasks shows that you, as the administrator, care and see the little things.

Boost your teacher morale by noticing the small wins. Apply any of the above gestures of appreciation or a shoutout during a meeting, or even an in-person thank you. Taking the time to recognize achievements will motivate your staff to focus on the positive.



## 3/ Improve and Develop Mentorship

Developing strong mentoring and induction programs works wonders in increasing teacher retention and in creating a positive environment. This can help slow down the revolving door of beginning teacher turnover. Experienced educators can play the role of a big brother for new teachers by being a support system. Anything from providing instructional support to being a listening ear, mentors can help guide new and struggling teachers. This can improve teacher morale in new and experienced teachers by creating a community of support.

#### **4/ Get to Know Your Teachers**

The foremost key to running a successful school is to know your staff and their needs. This goes a long way in building trust in each other and for smooth functioning. Administrators need to ask questions in getting to know each member and know a little more about their personal life than just work. There is a fine line between knowing your teachers and being their best friend. Taking an interest in your staff builds trust and lets them know you care about them as individuals and not just as teachers.

#### **5/ Give Teachers a Voice**

Encourage teachers to voice problems, advice, or suggestions in important administrative decisions. Administrators should not be the primary decision maker of the school. Teachers should be encouraged to give their input. Give your staff a platform to express their feelings and take their suggestions.

#### **6/ Open Door Policy**

Going hand in hand with giving teachers a voice, encourages them to also bring problems to you. Open door policy is the best way to foster open communication. By this policy, teachers have a voice and an outlet to bring issues forward can help ease their stress. Often, teachers just need a good listening ear when it comes to matters.

However, some issues may be larger and need more than a listening ear. When it comes to this, listen and let your teacher know you will need to think about the issue and get back to them with your decision.

Having an open door policy will boost teacher morale, and give you insight to possible issues and problems other teachers may be experiencing.

#### **7/ Your Team and the Big Picture**

Letting your staff understand your goal and the 'big picture' make teachers more excited. They relate your goal with the welfare of the school and this increases their morale and gives them the boost to achieve the 'big picture'. As a leader, you need to give your team a purpose. By doing this, you are engaging your faculty.

[As mentioned in Jim Collin's book \*Good to Great\*, great companies are built by placing the right people in the right seats on the bus. Running a school is similar to running a company. You need to start with the right people on the bus before you drive into the direction you want to go](#)



## **8/ Respect Their Time**

Genuinely respect teachers and their time. There's so much happening with teachers throughout their day, personally as well as in the classroom. Adding extra weight to their overflowing plates could be more detrimental than useful. Use your judgment and cancel meetings well ahead of time to give your staff a free hour or two to catch up. If you can't cancel a meeting, plan the meeting accordingly, so there isn't any wasted time.

## **9/ Build a Foundation of Trust**

Show your teachers you trust them. Whenever a teacher comes up with a new idea or a suggestion, show them your trust. By showing your trust you are allowing your staff to flex their autonomy. As the leader, be there for support and stand as a resource. But give them the space to decide on how much acceleration to give or when to break.

Teacher Morale in the context of Ladakh is highly needed. There are hundreds of teachers who get transferred to the remotest areas of Ladakh India. Their dedication towards their profession is highly appreciated. The situation they face is surmountable and they deserve a moral boost every now and then. The pictures that are followed is from Govt High School Puga Nomadic Residential Nyoma one of the remotest and toughest areas of Leh Ladakh. These pictures tell the story of dedicated teachers of UT Ladakh.



Nomadic children all set with their parents on the horse back to school



Teachers of Nomadic Residential School Nyoma waiting for the students to welcome them to school.





Meeting point of Parents and Teachers. From here the parents will handover their children to the teachers.



Group Photo with teachers, parents and students and a final farewell



Teachers are struggling hard to move the truck. All need to reach school before dark.



Teachers coming to join the school in the First week of March. Govt High School Nomadic Residential School Puga Nyoma







Teachers painting the school walls, cleaning the classroom, setting the library for a fresh start of the school



Teachers are engaged in planting saplings and getting new furniture for the school





Group photograph of the Govt High School Puga Nomadic Residential school Nyoma

Resources:

1. Jim Collins- Good to great
2. Connecticut State Department of Education slides
3. Photo courtesy Mr Dorjey Angchuk Govt teacher posted at High School Puga

Created By:

Kaneez Fatima

Principal Higher Secondary School Saspol

UT Leh Ladakh

