

11/3/17

High School is such an interesting stage in life because of abundant competition opportunities. Students start performing at a higher level because of both developmental growth and hours of hard work. This week proved especially full of high stakes competitions. While results varied from surprising success to downright disappointment, our Tillers competed well by showing focused determination to do their best.

Football started the weekend off by battling a tough league opponent, falling short in the end. The score was tied at halftime, but what most people didn't know at the time was that our quarterback would not be able to finish the game. Unfortunately, our 2nd quarterback wasn't available either because of a previous injury. This meant that we would have to play at our highest level with a quarterback who had taken just a few snaps all season. It seemed like a recipe for disaster, but our boys demonstrated a gutsy performance coming up just short. They have another opportunity tonight to face a very difficult opponent for senior night. If they find a way to prevail, they would be set up well to compete in the first round of CIF next week. I don't know what the outcome will be tonight, but I am confident that our Tillers will bring a focused effort. It is always fun to win, but it is extremely rewarding to watch our students grow and face challenges with intensity and purpose. (FYI – Our freshman football boys' won a league championship yesterday by defeating Cypress High School)

Speaking of winning, the band placed 1st on Saturday at the Golden State Field Classic. They improved their score significantly from 2 weeks ago by 10 points and received a 61.00. This is one of the better scores in the area and reflects a great deal of hard work. Both the guard and the percussion received 4th place in what proved to be a very successful day for Tiller artists. They will compete at Los Altos High this weekend.

Another important competition this week was the Empire League Finals for Boys and Girls Cross-Country. Before the start of the boys' race, I realized that our Tiller group consisted of one senior, one junior and the rest were a combination of sophomores and freshmen. To my surprise, the coaches (Keith Martyn and Pablo Guzman) were wondering if they could sneak into 3rd place as a team in order to qualify for CIF. I was grateful for the quick tutorial I received on who to watch as the race unfolded. About half way into the race, it became obvious that we needed to beat Cypress High School in order to qualify. I monitored spaces between our runners and their opponents. I had to leave the race soon after, but I received a text later that night, "We qualified!" It turns out that Jose Mungia (11th grader; place 5th; 16:06.7 – a PR), David Flores (9th grader; 14th place; 16:49.4), Adrian Rios (10th grader; 19th place; 17:06.7 – a PR), Kenneth Esquivel (12 grader; 21st place; 17:15.1) and Juan Carapia (9th grader; 25th place; 17:26.4 – a PR) combined to compile the 3rd lowest point total (low scores are good) to qualify as a team for CIF.

The very next day, more Tillers competed in two CIF competitions, one for boys' Water Polo and the other for Girls' Volleyball. Our Assistant Principal, Ali del Castillo, traveled out to watch our boys compete against Elsenor High School, and I traveled to Costa Mesa to watch our girls.

It sounds like both competitions followed a similar script of playing extremely hard and competing well, but falling short in the end. Qualifying for CIF is not easy and both programs have a lot to be proud of as they competed this year. It's just so sad to see the season end, especially for our seniors.

Tuesday was not just a day full of CIF competition, but it was also Halloween. The baseball team hosted an inaugural Faculty vs Students softball game titled Heroes vs Villains. It gave people an excuse to dress up. It had the feel of a picnic softball game where people like me tried to do *way too* much for what their current state of fitness allowed, while others simply participated in what was a relatively new experience. From competitors to observers, we all enjoyed hanging out with each other playing a fun game of softball. As it should be, the faculty prevailed on the scoreboard, but it was a win for everyone. Students got to see their teachers in a whole new light and teachers got to see their students having fun. As for me, it will go down as one of my most memorable Halloweens.

Despite the emphasis on games and competition this week, there were some productive professional development experiences as well. One of my favorite moments was working with Jennifer Wong, Physics teacher, to deliver a session on Project Based Learning. I have observed her facilitate such lessons that seemed to really engage students in rigorous learning, and I was excited to help her tell her classroom story.

The late start was about more than quality PD for teachers. It also meant a new College & Career Readiness Lesson (CCR) for our students. I made it a point to get out and observe a variety of CCR sessions because I know these are strategic for our students. I am so grateful for teachers who treat the CCR lessons with intentionality. What a gift these lessons are for our students to take a step back and look at the big picture, as well as receive practical advice on how to navigate the college application process.

At another point this week, I entered a senior AVID classroom just when a student was getting ready to hit the submit button to a college application! Joanna Vandal, an AVID teacher, invited me to stay and watch as Jennifer, one of her students, click the mouse to send her application. The rest of the room clapped in celebration. The celebration reminded me of all the hours of preparation and support required for that young lady to submit a solid application.

During my CCR visits, I had the privilege of stepping into Pablo Guzman's (Social Studies Teacher) classroom. He followed the format of the lesson prepared by our awesome counseling team. What Mr. Guzman brought to the lesson was his unique voice. The topic was writing a personal statement, and it was powerful to hear one of our teachers share his story of immigrating to this country and navigating the whole college process. He talked about his cattle ranch experiences on his grandfather's ranch in Mexico and how that helped him in some ways to attend college. The room was quiet and filled with attentive listeners as he shared his story.

Listening to Mr. Guzman share his story gave me a new appreciation of all he has accomplished, but no more appreciation for what I observed him do on Tuesday- Arlene, his best runner, was

trying to do the impossible, compete on an injured knee, which more importantly, kept her from training for almost a month. She is one of the most determined young people I have ever encountered and I know that her determination will take her far in life. However, on this day, she pushed herself to utter exhaustion. What started out as a race pace slowly declined into a survival jog. As she slowly moved by Coach Guzman at about the 2 and half-mile point, he reached out and gently grabbed her and held her up against a nearby railing. It brought finality to what was a difficult ending to Arlene's season, and it was both painful and touching to watch. As difficult of a moment that was for such a quality person as Arlene, I was grateful she had a Coach like Mr. Guzman to be there for her.

May you have an awesome weekend as we enter fully into the month of November!

Go Tillers!

Jon