

Friday Reflection

November 6, 2020

2020 continues to progress in unique, strange and out of the ordinary fashion. While students and staff were busy about their work, our country held a presidential election. It was the largest amount of votes cast in the history of our country and the results were very close in key states. In a typical election, I would go to bed with a pretty good idea who was elected, but this is 2020. The counting still continues.

It would be impossible to ignore our country's greater context for this week, but I was proud of our school community for keeping focused. Teachers continue to develop their process for operating in such a challenging environment. I had the opportunity to observe three classrooms for extended periods of time. It is still amazing to see what appears natural now for teachers and students that was completely foreign just a few months and weeks ago.

While many have adjusted fairly well to the current conditions and found a way to make it work, other students find it more difficult. We have a number of students failing one or more classes for a variety of reasons. Our team has focused on ways to reach out to each student and their parents, and yesterday was another important step. The guidance team, with the help of our support staff and teachers, invited seniors struggling in one or more classes to come after school for a meeting. About 25 students came in with someone in their family to meet with their counselor. I am not sure what I was expecting, but as students arrived I immediately recognized them. In many cases, these were students who seemed to thrive in the form of school pre March 13. Some were heavily involved in extracurricular activities and vibrantly navigated our campus experience. Fast forward 7 months, and they find themselves struggling in one or more class in our current form of school. It broke my heart to hear some of their stories and to see the tears from a parent and the disappointment and shame coming from some students. I was extremely grateful for our team here at Tustin High School who took the time to call and meet with our students and their families. I saw students leave with a new sense of purpose, some strategies and hope in graduating. We do a lot of meaningful activities on behalf of students, and this one was up there in significance.

Another important activity this week happened in our advisory/CCR hour on Wednesday. Students took the MAP Reading assessment. This assessment, with the Lexia assessment, will provide important data for student strengths and opportunities for learning related to reading. High School is organized around different subjects and content. While teachers generally try to include learning activities that support a students growth in their ability to read, think and problem solve, we rarely check in and assess for some of those important foundational skills that impact learning in virtually every content area. We made a concentrated effort to make that happen, and now we look forward to discovering how we can move forward to ensure students are growing, especially some of our most vulnerable learners. There was a team of teachers and administrators in the background planning this day for some time, and it was exciting to see it happen. In two weeks, our students will take the Math version of the MAP test for some of the same reasons. Our goal is to grow all our students, and in particular students who need the most growth. It is great to be part of a team who is committed to such growth.

Go Tillers!

Dr. Jon Tuin

Tustin High School Principal