

Friday Reflection

October 9, 2020

For some reason, it is difficult to believe this is only our second week of hybrid, and actually our first full week. The routines feel established and we are on to new planning. It seems like such a long time ago we earnestly prepared to bring students back to campus. Now that we are two weeks in and feeling more comfortable with the procedures of our new normal, some reflections come to mind.

As I interacted with students this week, I realized two dynamics. The first is students who are coming to school right now are grateful for the opportunity. I know some might feel like distance learning is working better for them, but multiple students shared with me the importance of being present to learn. They talked about the value for them of being with friends and interacting with people. In short, they missed the relational dynamics of school. I think for me, truth be known, I missed the students as well. I know the adults in our school miss interacting with our students.

Another reality I encountered this week was the emotional weight our teachers carry at the moment. The pressures of our current world, the challenges of our current mode of schooling, and varying levels of angst around possible exposure to the COVID virus all weigh heavily on our teachers. This doesn't even take into consideration the likely pressures at home with their own families as a result of the current situation.

All our adults are feeling the weight. However, our counselors and mental health professionals share a close up view and are well connected to the struggle our students face. Whether it is emotional, academic or both, it isn't easy for anyone. I appreciate the proactive nature of our guidance crew, despite the immediate demands they encounter, including heroic efforts to get students on track. The last 6 months increased the number of students not successfully completing classes. We know we are not unique from other schools in that regard, but it doesn't help with the fact students need support. Our counselors are working collaboratively with student services and teachers to fight this important battle and create new strategies to change the trend.

Although I peered into the emotional challenges of others this week, I deeply feel it myself. However, I couldn't help but be encouraged this week. I am grateful for a team where people feel safe to share their struggles, and focused on supporting one another to meet the challenges. I see positivity despite the pain. I see focus despite the distractions. I see problem-solving despite the continually expanding issues. It may be a challenging time to be a Tiller, but it is still great to be a Tiller! We will continue to do the good work of growing our Tillers.

Go Tillers!

Dr. Jon Tuin

Tustin High School Principal