

Friday Reflection

October 16, 2020

All school days are shorter right now than our traditional schedule, but today is even a little bit shorter. The reason for our minimum day is our Report Card Week. Teachers are spending additional time reaching out and calling parents after school over the next week. While they are willing to speak with any parent asking for time to meet, their focus is more narrow. We decided on this shift to support students who need the most help. Our previous model of Report Card Night did not meet the needs of our current reality, so we decided to invest our extra time after school strategically. Again, if you did not get a call from a teacher and would like a conference, please email your teacher and let them know. They will be glad to meet with any parent.

I know that most of our students are finding a way to make distance and hybrid learning work, despite the challenges. However, there are other students who are struggling for a variety of reasons. Sometimes it is a challenge dealing with the technology. Sometimes home dynamics create distance learning barriers. Other times, just the dynamics of being isolated and separated from peers accelerates depression, anxiety or both. Distance learning is not ideal in many cases, but it is the reality for almost half of our students.

This week, I made an extra effort to listen to our students about their learning experience during this hybrid form of schooling. What became clear, was coming to school for some students is a life-line for engagement. Students shared about the struggle to keep up and keep motivated from home. They shared about how human interaction supported their engagement significantly. Sometimes that support derived from peers, other times it was a teacher, and other times it was a trusted adult here at school. On-line is helpful when "in person" is not possible. However, for some students, being able to connect in person is critical.

Although school these days is radically altered than school just 7 months prior, we still have seniors and they still need to prepare for life after graduation. Many seniors are currently focusing on their college choices to continue pursuing various dreams. One of the barriers for any student to continue with their education is finances. Gratefully, our guidance team put together a helpful evening on line to educate our students and their families about applying for financial aid. FAFSA can be an overwhelming process for anyone. Fortunately, we have a dynamic guidance team who is both knowledgeable about the process and happy to offer their support to students and families so they can successfully navigate the system. Over 70 plus parents joined on line Wednesday evening and another 40 logged on last night to take advantage of this valuable resource.

I appreciate our dynamic team of teachers, counselors and parents who invest time, energy and care into helping students now, and also support them as they prepare to launch. Life may be different, but it still goes on. It is great to be proactive and great to be a Tiller.

Go Tillers!

Dr. Jon Tuin

Tustin High School Principal