

Friday Reflection

1/11/2019

Vacations are great, but it was good to be back at school this week. I could sense the energy of both students and teachers to get this semester off to a solid start. The results of the first semester are in, and now it is time to focus on the second half of the year which brings so many important aspects of the year; not to mention graduation.

For seniors, this marks their last semester of high school. I could see from some individual students that this notion had already taken up space in their mind when I noted it. They seemed to express a burst of energy at knowing they had only one more semester to accomplish some of their goals.

One senior paused and said, "I can do this!"

It is that kind of attitude that makes all the difference. That is something I appreciate about our school community. The prevailing theme that flows from adults and students here at Tustin High School is "We can do this!" It doesn't mean that there are not challenges and stressors at times, but *we can do this*. One reason for my optimism is the collaboration I observe among our team. Strength in numbers is a thing. I see it in the classroom and in extra-curriculars like the arts and athletics. I wish for you and your student the very best this semester. I encourage you to reach out to our staff if you need support. Together, we can make this the best semester ever for your child.

To that end, the district is offering a great opportunity for parents, students, and staff on Tuesday evening, January 15th, at 6:00 pm at the Beckman High School Auditorium. We are fortunate to have Margaret Dunlap from Stanford University's *Challenge Success* program here to present important information for our community on what contributes to creating a healthy and successful student experience. The title of the evening is "The Well-Balanced Student", and she will offer some of the latest research and insights on how to navigate school well so that our students are thriving. We have a team of teachers, parent, students, and administrators who have received some of this training, and we are so glad that it is going to be available to all. We will have a bus leaving our school at 5:30 pm to travel to Beckman. We encourage you to call our school to reserve a spot for you and your family.

Speaking of thriving, we had a plethora of league athletic competitions occurring throughout the week. The moved up academic calendar has created some challenges for our league athletic schedules- specifically how to fit all the games in after winter vacation. Accordingly, some competitions occurred during break, and this week brought additional competitions which created a richly calendared week.

Because the stakes are higher, league competition brings a heightened intensity. There were times when our athletes were over-matched, and other times when the opposing team experienced the same from us. In other competitions, the teams were closely matched and the struggle was that much more intense. Whatever the scenario and setting, I was proud of how our students competed and I think some valuable learning happened as a result.

The girls' basketball team demonstrated such learning this week. Because of some unique circumstances, I was able to watch them play multiple games this week. Going back to their vacation game, they lost two really close overtime games in a row. It would have been very easy for the girls to get discouraged and not give a full effort. However, Coach Gocke and her girls reloaded and brought their full focus and energy on Wednesday night to deliver a convincing win. It was great that they won, but I was more impressed with their show of resiliency and determination in this pivotal game.

Hard work, passion, and determination are important in athletics, but this week we were able to surprise one of our teachers who has demonstrated those qualities over a long period of time. Representatives from the Orange County Parenting Magazine and our district leadership came out on Thursday morning to inform Mr. Ed Hernandez that he is a finalist for teacher of the year for the Orange County Parenting Magazine. Their theme is heroes in our schools, and Mr. Hernandez was nominated for his heroic efforts with our students. As the director of the T-Tech program, he has challenged, pushed, and supported our students to accomplish bold dreams. One example of his remarkable efforts is the Boeing internship legacy that has developed here at Tustin High School. Through his persistence, Mr. Hernandez was able to place a couple of summer interns for the first time at Boeing about 7 years ago. The reputation of our students has grown to where he was able to place 8 junior students in the summer internship at Boeing this year. That means that 10% of the interns were Tillers. Not only that, but 3 out of the past 6 years, a Tustin student was selected to return a following year to serve as a lead intern, running the summer intern program. Just recently we learned that Alexis Mitchell, a current senior, received the highest marks of all 80 summer interns in the program last summer. The Tustin/Boeing story is just one example of Mr. Hernandez's dedicated efforts to grow his students. He traded his engineering career, creating impressive things, for a teaching position where he is growing impressive young people. He is an example of one teacher at Tustin who is changing futures for students. I am grateful to be part of a team where that happens a lot!

Go Tillers!

Dr. Jon Tuin

Tustin High School Principal