

Friday Reflection

10/12/18

Self-efficacy is a word used often at Tustin High School in recent years. It is one of our four Social Emotional Learning (SEL) competencies, which means we value it and want to help form that more deeply in students. It is also an intimidating and unique word that is rather abstract. However, this week, I observed the impact of that concept on our students in a variety of settings.

Wikipedia describes self-efficacy as follows:

en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Self-efficacy

Self-efficacy is an individual's belief in his or her innate ability to achieve goals. Albert Bandura defines it as a personal judgement of "how well one can execute courses of action required to deal with prospective situations".

The Medical Dictionary describes self-efficacy this way:

medical-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com/self...

Self-efficacy is an important concept of social cognitive theory, which was first proposed by Bandura in 1977 and reflects one's confidence in performing a particular behavior and overcoming barriers to that behavior (Bandura, 1977).

It is interesting that the naming of this concept has been around since 1977, but the dynamics of self-efficacy have been around for a long time. I observed this week that self-efficacy is alive and well among our Tiller students, teachers, and coaches.

On Monday, we hosted a challenging league volleyball game against Cypress High School. I remember them being a solid team the year before, and they have developed into an even better team this year. As I watched the first game play out, I understood the challenge our girls were facing. The score after the first match reflected a sizeable gap in ability between our team and the opponent.

It was at that point, the girls decided to choose self-efficacy. There wasn't a lot of evidence in the first game to warrant such a mental shift, but that didn't stop our girls from choosing to believe they could overcome the seemingly insurmountable barrier before them. For the next hour, our girls elevated their game to a whole new level. The increase in their belief in their ability to play at the level required to beat such a strong opponent, was evident. They returned spikes that seemed unhittable. They delivered hits with increasing confidence and they greatly decreased the number of unforced errors. Something shifted.

I would love to report that our girls pulled of and incredible upset, but that didn't quite happen. They lost the remainder of games by the narrowest of margins, but there was clearly a shift in the level of self-efficacy. That same mental approach carried over into Wednesday as the team traveled to play another league team and pulled out a victory in 5 matches- the last one ending in a 15-13 score.

Two other Tiller teams I observed this week who showed self-efficacy were the girls' tennis team and the boys' water polo team. In both cases, the scoreboard did not communicate the reality of the situation. Both the girls' tennis and boys' water polo teams showed impressive grit and determination. Both lost close competitions, but I watched each of them compete with intensity and a sense of belief that their efforts on the courts and in the pool mattered.

Another strong example of self-efficacy I observed occurred in the plaza during our Club Rush this week. I watched 46 different clubs market themselves to the whole school with observable self-efficacy. As I listened to each group offer their pitch in such a believable manner, I was so impressed with the energy and passion of our students.

One particular corner of the plaza yielded an interesting dynamic that quietly modeled self-efficacy for all our students. A group of senior boys decided to form a "Senior Men's Club". Trying to be funny, I asked them if it was open to "seniors" like me? They smiled and said that their club was open to anyone. The boys seemed like they just liked hanging out with each other and wanted to have a name to call their circle of friends with positive intent.

However, it turned out that the club adjacent to them was the "Gender Equity Club". How ironic that these two clubs ended up next to each other. There was some light-hearted acknowledgement of the irony from the boys, but I knew that the "Gender Equity Club" brought a completely different energy and intent to its formation than the table next door. Ellie Cho is the founder, and passionately cares about equity. It would have been so easy for her to be intimidated by the group of senior boys next to her, but she showed incredible self-efficacy. She championed her club with confidence, displaying a powerful belief that her club mattered. She was willing to stand and pitch her club because she believes in the cause.

Wednesday was an extremely unique day that sent our students on a variety of different activities. Freshman headed off to a variety of field trips- most of which were local colleges and universities. The sophomores participated in a practice PSAT test and Financial Literacy Workshops presented by Farmers and Merchants Bank, while the juniors engaged in a PSAT exam as preparation for the SAT (a college admissions test). The seniors came together for breakfast, a class picture, and assembly featuring a hypnotist. The day was a nice change of pace for our students, but I saw the impact of self-efficacy for those taking the PSAT. I could see the difference between those who have put in hours of hard work believing that their hard work would pay off as they took this important college test.

Finally, the football game last night was a celebration of the impact of so many levels of self-efficacy. For starters, there were all the performing groups last night: the cheerleaders, dance

team, all-male dancers, band and color-guard. These young people contribute hours and hours of hard work because they believe that they will develop together into a group that is going to deliver quality performances. Among all the performing groups, I noticed the level of improvement they have achieved over the course of a year. The band is bigger and more robust. The color-guard is more precise and expressive. The cheerleaders are more cohesive and animated. The dancers are more in sync and comfortable than ever. And the male dancers are simply dancing at a whole new level of expertise. It is the combination of hours of focused and quality work, a competent coach/director who knows what it takes and believes in the students, and student self-efficacy that creates the formula for success. The whole evening was a wonderful showcase and celebration of artists and performers.

That leads me to main event on the field- the football game. We played our second league game coming off a disappointing loss last week. The whole season has been quite a transition. There was a transition with the coaching staff, a whole new offense, and even the players have transitioned their approach to the game. The players have had to learn that the coaches know what it takes to develop into an impactful team. They had to believe that focused and hard work was the road to real growth, and they had to learn to believe that if they go out there and execute what they have learned with full effort and passion, then good things are going to happen. Last night was the celebration of all that coming together. Going into the game, most people thought it would be a challenging test for our Tillers. Even the most positive Tiller might not have believed the outcome. By half time, it was 35-0, and the game ended with a score of 45-7.

Outcomes don't always end the way we dream, hope, or plan. However, without those dreams, hopes and plans, they for sure don't happen. I was so grateful that our school community who attended last night got to experience the coming together of so many dreams, hopes, and plans. I am sure that for each of the groups and individuals mentioned in this reflection, they would all agree that they haven't accomplished what they set out to accomplish, not at all; however, this week, many were able to catch a little encouragement along the way, through the power of self-efficacy.

It was a great week to be a Tiller!

Go Tillers!

Dr. Jon Tuin

Tustin High School Principal