

## Friday Reflection

10/19/2018

Although meant to be a generally light-hearted, fun play (it was), “The Audition” brought some emotionally moving scenes as well. Ms. Markley worked with our Advanced Theater students to present a story of a high school audition experience. There were some relevant back stories of struggles students face woven into the script. A couple of really powerful scenes highlighted destructive adult expectations of students and the stressful and anxious dynamics that creates for them. I was so proud of the work our students did to create a theater experience showcasing their talents and allowing others to celebrate in that.

Related to student stress and anxiety, three teachers and myself participated in a “shadowing” experience this week. We all followed a student for the entire day. The purpose was to understand more deeply the school day from the perspective of a student. I didn’t see how I would be able to carve out a whole day for this project, but I was so grateful for that decision by the end. This is part of our Challenge Success efforts to look at dynamics that might play into unintended stress for students. It was a valuable learning gift for me as a school leader.

I am usually here before 6:45 anyway, but somehow making it to a zero-period class felt early. Maybe because the school is quiet and dark walking to class on a late Fall morning. I met Anaka Mahesh in her class well before the bell. This is her routine. I sat with Anaka, engaged in classes, and followed her throughout the day. I was reminded of what it means to shift gears quickly and totally dive into a topic for 50 minutes as if it were the only focus for the day. Then, I found myself mentally going in a much different direction with a different subject. There were little things that I unexpectedly appreciated throughout the day; When a teacher greeted students at the door or took time to find out about some good things going on in their worlds. Those few minutes helped to bridge the class environments and settle in to the next experience.

Another important activity I did with this was tally the homework load each class period created for Anaka. I would ask her how much homework that class just added to her plate for that night, and then we would move to the next subject. By the end of the day, she unwittingly had accumulated 3 hours of homework. For her that means coming home from tennis practice and matches and getting right to work. Her experience on this day was consistent with our survey. We have two groups of students- There is a cluster of students who does an average of one hour of homework a night, and another group that averages 3 hours a night. Anaka takes several challenging classes like many other students, thus her three hours.

I also was reminded that many of our students do so much beyond classes and homework. Anaka had an important league tennis match that day where she won, as usual. She happens to be the highest rated player in the Empire League since she has beaten all of her league opponents. However, that doesn’t happen on accident. Anaka dedicates countless hours to improving her game. This particular match was significant to her because it was Senior Night for the girls’ tennis team. She shared during the day how much she was going to miss her senior teammates, and I

was glad to watch them play their last home game. Anaka also attended two meetings during the school day- Tutorial represented an opportunity for her MUN committee to do some important work in preparation for our upcoming MUN conference. Lunch time offered her the opportunity to attend a Givers United meeting in Mr. Reta's room. As I reflected on the day, I realized that snack time was the only real down time in her entire day.

I also noted that the day went quickly and was in awe of the incredible learning she was experiencing throughout the day. She worked on developing a visual argumentative piece for saving the ocean in one class, learned about numerous global and current issues in another class, analyzed the differences and similarities of the Jacksonian and Jeffersonian democracies in yet another class, learned about various components like resistors that will lead to programming a form of robotics in another class, gained a deeper understanding of complex formulas to explain friction dynamics from a simulation the day before in *another* class, and finally solved equations that lead to creating trigonometric graphs depicting asymptotes in her final class of the day. I appreciate the hard work that our teachers and students do every day in the classroom; what a gift it was to experience a whole day in the life of a student!

Anaka isn't the only student who works hard. Another student who has worked extremely hard over the past four years is senior Chloe Carraway. She is another student who has challenged herself academically, but it was her hard work on the golf course that allowed her to qualify on Tuesday for CIF in league play. This will not be a new experience for her having previously qualified for CIF multiple times, but we are pulling for her to have her best experience so far in CIF next week.

We had another group of young ladies compete in CIF this week. The girls' volleyball team traveled to Paloma Valley last night in a challenging first round game. Although they didn't make it to the next round, it has been a solid season of growth for a team that is made up of mostly younger players.

While girls' volleyball was doing their thing out in the Inland Empire, a host of other activities were occurring on the same evening. Our choir traveled to the Enderle Center on 17<sup>th</sup> Street for a community performance. We also hosted our annual Report Card night in the Pavilion to give parents an opportunity to make some connections with teachers and get feedback on their child's work in school. I appreciated connecting with parents for a little while before heading off to watch our Tillers play football.

The outcome of the football game wasn't what we had hoped, but we still have at least one more game next Friday night at home for Senior Night. As our boys competed out on the field, it was encouraging to have our cheerleaders and band at the game. Both had good energy and added a nice touch to an away game.

I am grateful for so many inspirational experiences in any given week, but there is usually at least one moment each week that is particularly touching. That moment happened yesterday during a counselor meeting. Our counselors meet each week to plan, prepare, and do work. They are

focused on both school goals and their individual students. They work hard to create a thriving environment for our students that challenges and prepares students for accomplishing their dreams.

Yesterday, one of our students asked to come to the meeting to present an idea- a dream. Faith Fernandez is a senior here at Tustin and participates in our MUN program. She is an extremely articulate and confident young lady that has overcome a great deal academically. She understands her limitations but has also developed her strengths significantly. As she presented her plan for helping students with connecting to college scholarships, I thought about all that she has overcome and all the support she has received. Faith shared her thoughts with precision, passion, and clarity. I was so impressed with how well she communicated with all the adults in the room, catching a glimpse of the kind of impact she is going to have on our world moving forward.

All the classes, activities, and homework are not just something to pass the time. High School is about preparing for the future and transitioning from childhood to adulthood. I had the privilege of observing first hand this week some students who are navigating that transition well. I know adult mentoring, teaching, counseling, leading, and parenting all contribute to the success of our students.

This was another great week to be a Tiller!

Go Tillers!

Dr. Jon Tuin

Tustin High School Principal