

Friday Reflection

10/5/2018

What do Spiderman, the Hulk, and Superman all have in common? Superheroes is a correct connection, except for me, they were all part of a lesson in a freshman English class that taught students how to write a theme. In a span of 40 minutes, students wrestled with such important concepts as identity, power, responsibility, anger, sacrifice, truth, justice and the America way. They learned that a theme is arguable, universal, and expressed in a complete sentence. As a result of this lesson, I watched our students write thoughtful themes that required critical thinking, empathy, communication, and collaboration.

One reason for my enthusiasm around this lesson was the connection I made to teachers. They are truly superheroes that deal with all the themes addressed during this lesson in any given day. They sacrifice a great deal on behalf of our students in order to help the next generation grow. This week allowed me to closely observe a number of classrooms and I am so grateful for the passion, thought, and compassion our teachers lavish on our students. As we learned from our Challenge Success Survey results, our students face many challenges and operate under significant stress. I am particularly grateful for the teachers who work collaboratively to create the very best learning opportunities for students. I saw this in action this week in multiple classrooms. Like any educational institution, we are a work in progress, but I have never felt so encouraged by our team.

Another source of encouragement this week was our School Site Council meeting. We met this Monday to look at our School Plan for Student Achievement (SPSA). This team of students, parents, teachers, classified staff, and admin are the oversight to our school goals; plans for achieving those goals and allocating resources to support that work.

We have three measures of accountability in our SPSA:

- 1) Increase our writing scores by 5% on the district benchmark assessments for English, Math, and Science (These are quarterly assessments where students must create a claim, cite evidence, and support with reasoning. We call it CER. Students write these assessments in each of the three disciplines. The teachers come together and score the assessments based on a predetermined rubric. Our plan for monitoring is to compare Spring scores yearly.)
- 2) Increase our A-G compliance percentage by 3% for graduating seniors. (A-G compliance requires a student to earn a C or higher in all the courses required for admittance into the University of California school system. A few years ago, we had about 25% of our graduating seniors meet the criteria. In the last two years, we've seen

65% of our students achieve compliance. This is an impressive number compared to other schools with our similar demographics, and competitive with our neighboring schools.)

3) Increase our SEL survey results by 5%. (We survey our students each Spring on the four SEL competencies: growth mindset, self-efficacy, self-management, and social awareness. Our belief is that helping our students learn social/emotional skills will better prepare them for meeting academic and life challenges.)

Our School Site Council offered thoughtful insight into how we can better serve our students. I am grateful for these people who prioritize time in their day to support our Tustin High School mission.

Another encouraging event this week happened at lunch on Tuesday in our school cafeteria. Tiller of the Quarter is luncheon opportunity for our teachers to identify a student that has demonstrated our school-wide student expectations. To be respectful, engaged, and determined is what we ask of our students. During our morning announcements, we say their future depends on it. Tuesday morning was a meaningful gathering of students who have in some cases recently stepped up, and in others been stepping up for quite some time. The hot dog and side dishes may not have been the reason our students rose to the occasion; however, it was great to have an occasion to celebrate their efforts. We will host other Tiller of the Quarter celebrations throughout the school year, and I am already looking forward to these upcoming events. It is great to celebrate our students, especially those who have been working extra hard.

Go Tillers!

Dr. Jon Tuin

Tustin High School Principal