

Friday Reflection

12/20/2018

Last Friday was anticipated greatly by many of our students and staff. It lived up to the hype. Among the Winter Assembly, Winter Dance Program, and Boys' Basketball game against Foothill, there was plenty of entertainment and celebration. While all this was occurring, the Girls' Basketball team was off playing a game in Avalon and doing some team bonding. Just to add to the synergy of the weekend, the Girls' Soccer team went out and won two games to capture the "Best of the West" Tournament Championship and remain undefeated.

Assemblies present an important aspect of our school calendar. Our ASB students put a great deal of time and effort into planning and managing these big events to bring our school together. The Winter Assembly was held in two sessions and is usually more performance oriented than other assemblies. Two freshman students provided the entertainment as individual performers celebrating the season. When Shannae Bernales's name was called and she casually walked into the center of the Pavilion, I felt a little nervous wondering if this mild-mannered freshman would be able to carry the large audience in presenting her song. She only had to let out a few notes to answer my question with a resounding "yes", and my hesitancy transformed into wonder and admiration. Not to be outdone, Maia McBride walked on to the Pavilion floor moments later to perform a ballet dance to a touching ballad. She covered the floor with grace and poise, and the audience sat impressively quiet as she finished her beautiful dance. It is awesome to know these two young ladies will be here for three more years. Of course, our freshman performers were joined by our traditional performances from the cheerleaders and dance teams. ASB's Santa skit was a nice touch to the holiday theme and provided some comic relief.

During the assembly, the Dance Team and All-Male showed off one of their routines from the Winter Dance Show. My wife and I later enjoyed that show, watching one moving number after another. Their precision and attention to detail is astounding. There is a group of senior boys who have been dancing together now for multiple years and have brought their craft to a whole new level. I soaked in each number on Friday night because I know this group is special. Later that evening, Kierstie Nielson announced that both Dance Team and All-Male will be off to Hawaii this Spring to compete in a national competition. Of all the amazing dances, I really enjoyed watching the routines combining both girls and boys. Both groups work so hard and are impressive on their own, however, it was fun to see them working together to create something delightful and unique like they did Friday night.

While creativity flowed in our Old Gym, intensity permeated throughout Foothill's Gym. Boys' Basketball competed in a close game against our crosstown rival. I got periodic score updates

from my admin team, and it appeared the teams were evenly matched. Fortunately for us, our boys pulled away with time winding down, and we came away with an impressive “W”! Go Tillers!

As fun as the weekend was for so many of our students, Monday rolled around and signaled the beginning of “Finals Week”. It was the last day of regularly scheduled classes for the semester and most classes engaged in some kind of activity to help prepare students for finals on Tuesday through Thursday. In all the focus on finals this week, I observed two events that warmed my heart as the leader of Tustin High School.

Monday afternoon, the Tustin High School PTO hosted a very nice luncheon for staff to thank them and celebrate with them. Many teachers and staff came to the cafeteria to eat and enjoy one another’s company. Everyone in attendance was grateful for the kind gesture and impressed with the presentation quality. We have great team of people, and that includes parents. We could not do all that we do without our parents. Watching them celebrate our teachers and staff made me proud of our Tustin community.

Later that day, the same space transformed from a luncheon venue into a massive study hall. Link Crew sponsored a “Cocoa and Cram” study session that brought many students together Monday afternoon to prepare for finals. I worked with two seniors, Abbey and Haley, for a while to help them get ready for their Economics test as they worked to secure their meaning of frictional, structural, and cyclical unemployment. They also solidified their conceptual understanding of proportional, progressive, and regressive income tax. Learning these concepts with these two seniors was a good reminder of the student experience. I know finals can be stressful, but a lot less so for students like these two young ladies who put in the time to prepare.

While finals tend to generate some stress, some courses create a culminating activity that addresses the academic standards in a fun and creative fashion. One of our T-Tech courses is a great example. Students tested their toy cars (these cars have taken about a month to design and build) for speed on an outdoor straight track that covered the length of about two classrooms. CO2 cartridges provided the propulsion for the cars, and one made it the length of the track in 1.1 seconds! While more formal assessments have their role in the academic classroom, it was great to see students ending their semester with a sense of accomplishment and celebration.

Winter Break not only means the end of the semester and seasonal celebration, but it also signals the end of a calendar year. As I look back on 2018, I am so grateful for our school and the people it represents. We are engaged as a team to do good work on behalf of our students. I am grateful for another year to continue that work.

One of the tools we use to mark the days and months in a year is a calendar. The City of Tustin Parks and Recreation put together such a calendar for the 2019 year. What makes this calendar

extra special from a Tiller perspective is that Denise Torres and Andrew Ly contributed photographs featured along with 10 other Tustin community members. Denise's February picture of a picket fence and July picture of prominent Tustin street signs, along with Andrew's October picture of a tractor, highlight the opportunities many of our students have to grow their photography skills in our photography course, which is part of a series within the Arts and Media CTE Pathway.

Looking back on 2018, students have accomplished a great deal. For many, 2019 will mean a transition from high school to another setting (hopefully college for many). Other students will move from one grade to the next in 2019. Regardless of where your child may be in their journey, we wish you and your family the best in this coming year. Happy New Year, and it is great to be a Tiller!

Go Tillers!

Dr. Jon Tuin

Tustin High School Principal