Friday Reflection

2/1/2019

January ended well in Tillerland. While most of the nation hunkered down to survive incredibly cold temperatures and many states missed school, we experienced a typical week full of activity in and out of the classroom. I tried to explain to some students how blessed they were to live in their current climate while many of them stood bundled in some extra layers of clothing; It is all a matter of perspective.

Perspective is probably a good theme for the entire week. As I reflect on several events this week, I see how significant people’s perspectives were as they approached or responded to various moments throughout the week.

Our monthly Challenge Success meeting on Monday proved insightful. This is such an important group because so many perspectives are represented: Parents, Students, Teachers, Admin, and the Challenge Success coach.

We were reminded of our mission statement for the group:

“Tustin High will ensure that all parties are authentically engaged in challenging and purposeful learning while minimizing stress and valuing each member of the community.”

The majority of this year has been dedicated to understanding the student perspective on their learning experience. We have discovered that there are some basic steps we can take to decrease some stress and increase engagement. Eliminating homework over winter break, for example, was one step. We also learned this year that our efforts to grow our instructional practices addresses all aspects of the above mission statement. We will continue those efforts- especially knowing that it has such an impact on creating a well-balanced student. However, the primary focus for the Challenge Success effort now is on determining the best structure for late starts and tutorial. There is no schedule that will please everyone, but we are working to build a schedule and process for tutorial that makes the most sense for us right now. The Challenge Success team was updated on the task force meeting for tutorial and late start. We identified the pros and cons of our current practice and now it’s about coming up with options.

On Wednesday during Late Start, we held a variety of professional development sessions for our teachers. I facilitated one that proved to be an interesting study in the importance of taking action to gain a different perspective. My session involved teachers walking around the track four times. The first three times, they were asked to ponder and answer a different question for each lap. On the last lap, they were asked to debrief their experience on the first three laps and think about how this practice might be useful. While some important observations and insights were shared, there were some unintended benefits from the experience. For starters, it was great to breathe fresh air and be in the moment. There is something unique about the outdoors that helps
shift perspective and allows for a chance to both be in the moment and consider the bigger picture. Another outcome of the session was the opportunity to get to know colleagues in a more informal setting. I think it shifted our perspectives for one another as we talked and walked. I was grateful for the opportunity to listen, learn, and engage in professional and authentic conversations.

Another impact on perspective this week derived from a visit from Microsoft. Four professionals came to see how we used technology so that they could better pitch their product. Hosting visitors to our campus is a fairly frequent occurrence. There are a variety of reasons for these visits but it is generally because we consistently have amazing work going on here at Tustin High School. What was unique about this visit was how impacted our visitors appeared as a result of watching our students and teachers in action. It is easy to take for granted the collaboration, the use of technology, and the push for higher level thinking and creativity, but our visitors reminded me that we are growing something special here at Tustin High School.

Later that night, we had some very different activities occurring for our students and perspective proved to be important in all three situations.

A soccer game, a basketball game, and a music concert provided the different settings:

The Tustin Unified School District presented the 2019 High School Instrumental Music Honor Concert. Beckman, Foothill, and Tustin High School students participated in the Honor Jazz Band, String Orchestra, and Concert Band. Each of the directors in the district took their turn to conduct and the music was impressive. Both talent and hard work was showcased as the students performed. One piece of information provided important perspective for this event- each of these groups came together for about an hour and 15 minutes to rehearse earlier in the week. Knowing this information and listening to them play such difficult pieces beautifully certainly increased the impressive factor.

Just prior to visiting Beckman for the Honor Concert, I watched our boys’ basketball team battle for a spot in the CIF tournament. It was senior night, which always adds an additional layer of perspective as students have come to the end of their high school athletic experience. The larger and more vocal than normal crowd added to the intensity of the evening. At the end of the competition, the scoreboard was not in our favor and showed that the team’s CIF chances were limited to a potential wild card bid for this courageous group of boys. However, my perspective turned to my walk on Wednesday when Coach Bossenmeyer shared a personal experience about working to build one of his players. It reminded me that this Coach is committed to growing young men. Winning games and titles are great, but it is about developing character traits that will last a life time. I am grateful for this perspective.

When the basketball game started, our boys’ soccer team was locked into quite a game with the same school to determine the league championship. Because we had lost 1-4 to this team earlier this season, it would take a win to claim sole share of first place. A tie would not do it. In the first game against Valencia, they jumped out to a 3-0 lead by halftime. This game immediately took
on a different feel with both teams showing that they were intent on winning. About 25 minutes in the first half, Jonathan Medina scored to put us in the lead, 1-0. There was also a larger and more vocal crowd at the soccer game, and they celebrated the goal whole-heartily. However, before the buzz of the first goal was gone, the other team had countered, scoring a goal of their own. For the rest of the half, second half, and first overtime, not a goal was scored; just intense and emotional play. With the players on both teams exhausted, but not willing to give in, they entered the final overtime. Suddenly, the ball was kicked down the near sideline with one of our players moving slightly past the opponent. When he went to kick the ball from just inside the box, the other player desperately slammed into our player, drawing a penalty kick. With everyone focused on the Valencia goalie and our penalty kicker, the ref blew the whistle. Jordy Galan, the Tiller kicker, placed the ball strong and high into the back of the net putting us ahead 2-1. The other team tried desperately to score, but to no avail. The game ended in our favor: the league championship.

While the league title was a great achievement and the game was extremely exciting, I was grateful for our coach’s perspective. Coach Najera is also interested in growing quality young men. Watching the game, a teacher shared with me the reputation of soccer players many years ago. Today, the soccer boys are about more than just winning games; They are developing into quality young men as well. It was good to see them experience the fruit of their extremely hard work this year. I am sure they will appreciate their coach’s perspective more and more over the years.

It was good week to be a Tiller!

Go Tillers!

Dr. Jon Tuin

Tustin High School Principal