

## Friday Reflection

4/12/2019

Of all the athletic events, academic activities, and social interactions this week, four stood out to me this week. Each of these situations shed a different light on positive aspects of our school, and I wanted to share them with the larger Tiller community.

Track and Field is a unique sport. There is definitely a team dynamic, but the focus is on individual performances. It is also a sport where there is no defense. It is all about individuals pushing themselves to improve. Opponents definitely create a competitive environment to push one another, however, at the end of the day, the actual competition is within the individual.

One particular individual who stood out to me yesterday was Jose Munguia. Jose is a quiet unassuming young man at first glance. He is polite, respectful, and goes about his work drawing little attention to himself. He has some definite ability when it comes to running fast for a long period of time. During his four years at Tustin, he has worked hard both on and off the track. He competes intensely and generally places well in most races because his times continue to gradually creep down. Yesterday during a league meet, he ran his fastest times in both the mile (4:36) and 800 meters (2:02). The improvement was quite a breakthrough for him and bodes well for him as he competes in the Orange County Championships on Saturday night. It is quite an honor to be invited to this prestigious meet. Not only will his current coaches attend this meet, but the coaches from Concordia University, Irvine will be there watching because that is where Jose will be running next year. As Jose pushed himself yesterday and ran around the track at an impressive pace, I couldn't help but think about how focused and steady he has been the last couple of years in particular. While Jose is a special young man, he is not the only student who has quietly gone about their work here at Tustin and put themselves in a position to take advantages of great opportunities for next year; However, he is a great example of good things happening to a student who made consistently good choices over a long period of time.

Immediately after the track meet, our "Women of STEM" program took place in the cafeteria and inspired all who attended. Seven female engineers came to Tustin to share their story and encourage our girls and boys in their pursuit of a career in science, technology, engineering, and math. It was so interesting to hear about the diverse kinds of engineers and the different paths available. From making animated films to creating large buildings, engineers impact so many aspects of our lives. It was particularly interesting to see our Tiller students connect with these women. It was easy to picture our current students someday coming back to make similar presentations.

Speaking of impact, first days of school can be scary. Yesterday during tutorial, I saw two students standing together looking at a map. It didn't take too much intuition to gather they were new to Tustin High School. I introduced myself and asked them if I could offer some help. Their immediate concern was locating classrooms. I walked them around a bit, showing them a few key locations and learned about their recent move from out of state. It turned out these two students were sisters and they shared with me some specific interests they might want to pursue

at Tustin. I tried to imagine how intimidating it would be to show up to a school of 2,200 students not knowing anyone. I was also encouraged as multiple students stopped to meet the new students. I ended up handing them off to one of the students who offered to help. I was just telling the sisters how accepting our students generally are and it was pretty incredible to see students step up to that description so immediately.

I saw our Tillers step up to a challenge in another completely different context. Our boys' volleyball team played the best team in our league and one of the better teams in Orange County. The opponent had only lost one game all year, and our boys knew that it would take a total team effort to win. Anticipating the intense match-up, there were plenty of people on hand to watch. It was also teacher appreciation which increased the number of spectators. All the games were extremely close until the fourth set. We jumped out to a large lead and took control of that set. While it felt like we were in control, the score was tied two games to two going into the final set. The opponent regained focus and the fifth set was just as close as some of the previous sets. Fans were screaming and the pavilion seemed to get louder with every point. Our boys stayed focused and played extremely well as a team. Suddenly, our Tillers were looking at a 2 point lead, only one point away from an upset. The opponent served the ball, a couple of returns transpired, and then one of our players blocked a shot down to win the game. The fans and players went crazy in jubilation.

There was only one problem. The ref did not see the play occur the way it later showed up on video. He called an illegal hit on our player and gave the point to the other team. Just a couple of points later, the other team was going just as crazy as we had a few minutes before. The loss was devastating. It was particularly difficult to take because it just didn't feel right. However, I was so impressed with how our boys and coaching staff handled the situation.

When I visited the boys the next day at practice to check in and see how they were doing, I could tell that they were already putting on a growth mindset approach to that traumatic ending. I told them that events and moments don't define us. It is choices we make every single day, how we choose to approach big events and how we choose to respond to disappointments that define us. It isn't always about the high-stakes events, more often it is about little choices we make every single day that form us most.

As I reflected on this week, I was reminded of so many incredible adults and students who make our school special. We talk about developing a growth mindset and learning to manage the ups and downs of life. However, I saw that learning happening up close and personal this week.

Go Tillers!

Dr. Jon Tuin  
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