

Friday Reflection

9/6/2019

This summer, I spent some time reading Dare to Lead by Brené Brown, which challenged and inspired me. I realized through reading this book that making a difference is an important value for me. Like many others on our Tiller team, I work from early in the morning to sometimes late at night believing that students, adults, and even myself can grow and get better at doing life. I see it every day in classroom settings, activity venues, and athletics arenas. This was a typical week in many ways with all kinds of activity, and yet I tried to pause from time to time to observe the impact occurring in what might be thought of subtle interactions.

Athletics is often such a powerful setting for students to learn and grow. They not only learn how to perform certain skills and ways of working with others, but more importantly they learn about themselves as people. Usually, this learning is veiled in the fun of a sport or the comfort of being connected, but at its core, this learning is significantly more profound.

Consider the following fall sports for example that were in full swing this week:

Tennis – Our girls’ team competed twice at home this week. Whether competing individually or as partners, girls try to beat an opponent who often brings a much different level of skill to the match. It takes focus, determination, and strategy to win. I watched our girls intently compete and try to get better. Sometimes it resulted in a “win” and other times it didn’t. However, in either outcome, I saw their persistence and resolve to improve and learn. That kind of impact only occurs in the context of a safe community.

Golf – These girls always compete away from school and they are difficult to watch. However, they work hard every day to improve both their level of skill and ability to focus. I am grateful for this sport that affords students the opportunity to challenge themselves mentally and physically.

Cross Country – This week was particularly hot and I felt for these young men and women who engaged in workouts during the heat of the day. While coaches are careful to not push too far, this week revealed character and commitment of students who train and compete in relative obscurity. Tomorrow will be a race in Placentia, and that is when all the training, discipline, and hard work is revealed.

Water Polo – This is mostly a new group of young men and still dealing with the loss of a beloved coach. I appreciate their resolve and commitment to continued growth. They struggled last weekend against some really good teams, so it was good to see them prevail at home this week and start to come together as a team.

Football – Large crowds watched our team struggle in their first two games. I wish more could have seen the win last night. However, like all the other sports, it isn’t really about the

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recognition. It is about trying to get better as players, teammates, and people. It was good to see our young men take a step forward fighting through adversity.

Volleyball – This group is known for their family vibe. They know their goals and purpose for coming together every day. I appreciate the focus on everyone getting better at both the game and as people. It is a bonus this year that the girls are quietly showing they are one of the better teams in Orange County.

There so many other situations where I observed growth and impact this week. Last night, the band and colorguard performed their halftime routine. It was without uniforms because the group outgrew last year's supply, and new uniforms needed to be purchased. (They will show off both their uniforms and expanding numbers next week.) It is inspiring to go into their band room and watch them prepare so intently for performances. Some band members are shy and not as driven by individual recognition. However, it is obvious they care about the collective look and sound.

As great as it is to watch them perform, it was their Alma Mater challenge that impressed me the most this week. They posted a group of them singing the Tiller Alma Mater, encouraging other groups to take on the challenge. Leadership isn't about being the most vocal, visible, or powerful. Often is it more about showing up and modeling. That is what the Tiller band family did this week.

ASB is the identified student leadership group on campus. They have always done a great deal behind the scenes to put on student activities and events. I appreciate their commitment this year to increasing the level of student ownership in this work. Watching these students plan, prepare, and strategize how to get more students involved and engaged is encouraging - talk about impact.

One of the activities that ASB was heavily involved with this week was Back to School Night. They planned and put on a short presentation before the night started that included our jazz band, cheerleaders, and dance teams. It was a fitting way to welcome those who attended the event. I appreciate the impact these groups brought to the evening, but what I appreciate even more is the focus and commitment to working together as a team. Every time I watch them perform, I am grateful for the impact on individual students, not just their impact on the school.

Another group that quietly impacts our school in positive ways is our PTO. Their presence in the plaza on Wednesday night was not only encouraging, but it reminded me of how many parents are involved in support of our student groups. We have several booster and super booster groups. These parents give of their time and money to impact and grow students, and I am often impressed by their commitment to our students – all of our students.

One important function the PTO carried out at Back to School night was conducting our School Site Council elections to determine our official parent representatives. While all parents can

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come, we must identify three representatives, and I am glad to announce that Kim Keelin, Heidi Muñoz, and Jim Palmer received the most votes. This is great way for parents to learn about the impact of our school's important student outcomes. Thank you to all who offered to help. Your impact is evident.

The next day following Back to School night, I participated in our second, new and revised tutorial. We are still adjusting to students being required to attend a tutorial. The idea is that more students will actually get academic support. One of the challenges is addressing the students who do not find a tutorial to attend. Last week, there were about 25 students brought to the cafeteria because they did not find a tutorial. I estimated that about 50% of those were not intentional tutorial no shows. This week, there were about 50 students brought to the cafeteria, and I estimate that about 80% were not in the cafeteria on accident. Watching the approximately 12 adults meet individually with each student to look at their grades, attendance, and behavior was quite impressive. These conversations held students accountable while also being supportive. I know it is easy to think that a big system like ours is all about rules and procedures. And yes, while these have their place, I am grateful that the driving force for our team is figuring out how to best support and lead our students. I appreciate adults being willing to think outside the box and step up to explore ways to help students. These counselors, teachers, and admin are making a difference, and it is great to be a Tiller.

Go Tillers!

Dr. Jon Tuin

Tustin High School Principal

