

TIGER PAWS NEWSLETTER

Principal's Column

May 26, 2018

At our last District Leadership meeting, Superintendent Yantz asked the administrators from each site and administrative department to choose the most memorable event of the school year. At SPHS, this has been a remarkable year of achievement by individual students and groups, it has been a banner year for outreach and giving, and there have been countless wonderful performances. Still, it didn't take long for Mrs. Wichman, Mr. Speck, and me to choose our standout memory: Four years ago, we had a group of freshman boys who were probably the most consistently challenging group ever. We spent a lot of time with them. Now, they have grown into a most delightful, directed, and responsible group of young men. I have had some chances to personally check in with them express my pride in them and to congratulate them on their deliberate changes, and I took the opportunity to herald their growth in our SPEX assembly. I didn't name names; they know who they are. They also know, as I want all students to know, that they are an example of why we never give up. I've already determined that that will be our staff theme for the coming school year. NEVER. GIVE. UP.

That theme goes hand in hand with our Developmental Assets approach to creating personal connections with students. It can take the form of a greeting at the classroom door, sharing thoughts and honoring opinions, or it can be as simple as a smile and a greeting. In our hurry-up world, I see that the eye contact, patience, and warmth of just a few years ago have sadly taken a back seat in many interactions in the outside world, and I challenge each of us to be more thoughtful about slowing down, engaging with others, and seeking clarity before verbally blasting someone over a misunderstanding or a question not answered fast enough. I guess it all goes back to the point of the book *All I Need To Know I Learned in Kindergarten*.

Thanks go out to our Librarian, Shelee Wilkerson, and English teacher Mark Afram for hours of work pulling together our second year of "one book, one school" summer reading. Along with their dedicated Summer Reading Committee, as well as organizations such as the PTSA that generously donated to fund the program, each student in grades eight through eleven has already received a personal copy of *Born a Crime* by Trevor Noah. It is an easily accessible book in terms of content and the way it is written, and it supports our theme of resilience. I encourage all students and their families to read the book so we can have rich dialogues when school starts up again in August. We will again have a culminating assembly, and we are searching for just the right speaker to pull it all together.

Another recommended source for reading is www.challengesuccess.org, the website for the Stanford University program SPHS has joined with the purpose of helping our students continue to achieve while also living healthful and balanced lives, physically, mentally, and emotionally. It's a tall order with all that teens face, and we are persevering as we enter our second year of our Challenge Success partnership. On the C. S. site, you'll find interesting articles and a blog. They also have a presence on Facebook, if that is your preferred mode of communication. In addition to an awareness campaign, some of our school's initiatives this year were to continue to refine our homework expectations, create test and due date conflict calendars so students could avoid competing deadlines, the creation of an active student Challenge Success Club, and Shadow Days. Shadow Days consisted of about eight teachers each following one (volunteer) student for a full day. The observations they brought back to the greater staff were eye-opening and helped develop empathy for the students' routines. We will continue Shadow Days in the fall, along with several other priority endeavors. We will be seeking interested parents to join us as we discuss things like the merits of a later start to the school day and the potential for making that happen for our kids.

This has been a rich and positive school year. Are there things we can improve? Sure, and that's why we'll be back next year with a growth mindset and a resolve to continue to make things better. Some of the more visible things you can happily anticipate include a mid-year move into our new Math/Science complex, finalization of plans for the athletic areas, and completion of the installation of LED lighting in all high school buildings.

As we close out this school year, I would be remiss if I did not thank the PTSA for the continued support for SPHS. In all ways, great and small, they create support for the students, the staff, and the programs. Thank you, President Kathleen Michel, for giving, giving, and giving. Like the Booster Club, the PTSA works under a generous student-centered mindset. I can't even count the number of times I've heard "What's best for kids?" when decisions are made.

Likewise, I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge the SPHS careers of our two retirees. Both are in the English Department. Mr. Daniel Enright has been at SPHS for nearly eighteen years. He began in our Special Education Department and then moved into the English and Drama Departments. His wit and dedication (such as serving on the Bingo Committee and working Bingo several times a month) will be sorely missed. Mrs. Kim Kadletz has been here nearly as long, and she has garnered a huge student fan-base. She is unrelenting in holding high expectations for her students and supporting them while they reach those expectations. We will miss both teachers, and we're excited to hear about their next adventures.

Having mentioned adventures, best of all to our dear seniors as they face their next rite of passage, graduation. They are prepared, they are strong, and they will draw upon their South Pasadena base as they move ahead. We also welcome our incoming freshman class (2022!) to their four-year adventure at the happiest place on earth – South Pasadena High School!

Happy summer to you all!