

SPHS Tiger Paws
Principal's Report
September 13, 2017

It's a matter of perspective: Some people do a school-day countdown to June; I look at September and think, "Oh, no! We're already have one fewer month of the school year left!" In this one month after the start of the school year, we have had opportunities to reflect on myriad aspects of the academic year's beginning organization, activities, and trends, including areas for improvement of our processes. As always, the arrival of students was an energizing and exciting time after our months of preparation. Of particular note, the relaxed and positive feeling tone on campus was a signal of a good year to come. Additional high points for me in getting to connect with students were the visits administrators, counselors, and our School Resource Officer made to all freshman and senior classes. It was fun to look out at our senior students who, it seems, were so recently the "newbies" and to note and share with them how much they have already matured into almost-grads!

We are in our third year of our partnership with the Positive Coaching Alliance (PCA). They have made keynote presentations to our student athletes, parents, and coaches at the start of each athletic season since August, 2015. The emphasis includes sportsmanship and all that it entails, but it goes beyond that concept to how to build and promote resiliency, personal growth through athletic participation, how parents can best support their student-athletes, and coaching messages that are consistent with the notion of "growth mindset." Growth mindset, simply stated, is the idea that through hard work, we can improve our performance (in areas including, but not limited to, athletics). This would be opposed to a "fixed mindset," based on perceptions of natural talent or abilities being the key factor in success. Here at SPHS, for the last eight years or so, we have been promoting the principles of a growth mindset and the importance of persevering and working hard, even when goals seem difficult to accomplish. I was happy to see many parents in attendance at the PCA and fall team meetings, and I saw the smiles of recognition when the PCA presenter, Ray Lokar, gave ideas about the power of athletic participation for both the athletes and their parents and, in particular, when he discussed effective post-game discussions.

As I listened to Ray's PCA presentation that has a slightly different emphasis each season (hence my encouragement to parents to always attend), I was struck and pleased by the connection to our newest partnership, Challenge Success. Two days following the submission of this article, a team of eight is set to go to Stanford University to meet with the guru of growth mindset research and practice, Carol Dweck, and other key advocates of creating a balanced and supportive school and life experience. Our eight-person Challenge Success leadership team consists junior students Hayley Villapudua and Brandon Lee, parent Scott Lane, teachers Maryann Nielsen and Mark Afram, counselor Tracy Ishimaru, Assistant Principal Janet Wichman, and me. We have signed up to spread ourselves out to attend the majority of the workshops offered, and our plan is to bring back a wealth of resources to assist our school in OUR continued hard work toward growth. When we applied for a partnership with Stanford's Challenge Success program,

we were able to share that we have many great things in place for our students, positioning us well to fine-tune and upgrade our programs, policies, and outreach. Please remain alert for involvement opportunities in our cycle of continual improvement; we welcome representation from all constituent groups.

Last Friday, we had a very special event on campus. As the culmination of our Tiger Reads summer reading project, we had two assemblies featuring Natalie Warne. There was a buzz of excitement and accomplishment for the students who were in progress or completion of their summer reading – for freshmen and sophomores, March Three by John Lewis, and for juniors and seniors, Just Mercy by Bryan Stevenson. Our speaker referenced the books' material as she spoke of her own trajectory from an uninvolved and somewhat uninspired young person to someone who found a cause (Invisible Children) that touched her heart and turned her into an activist for social causes. While inspiring our students to become involved in causes that speak to their own hearts and minds, Natalie talked about the Anonymous Extraordinaries, or those who make a difference even when their work is not that of a big media moment or recognition. While encouraging students to be Anonymous Extraordinaries, she talked of students finding their own causes and, when times are tough, remembering what core issues motivated them, and how to involve others. After the assemblies, there was a lunch gathering with Natalie in which she answered students' specific questions in a smaller forum. The assembly and forum created a lovely common experience for all, and it will provide further talking points as teachers continue to explore the books' messages with students throughout the year. Kudos go out to our librarian Shelee Wilkerson and Mark Afram for spearheading the Tiger Reads plans along with other volunteers, as well as to SPEF for granting the funds to provide a personal copy of the books for each student and staff member.

September also brings us Club Rush. There are close to eighty campus clubs, ranging from service clubs to academic clubs to fun clubs, and beyond. For those students looking for a societal or global cause to support, we suggest that they may even want to start their involvement locally through one of the campus clubs. Goodness knows, with the many late summer natural disasters, there is no shortage of relief initiatives that are craving outreach and involvement.

Clearly, if word count can be correlated with levels of excitement, I am very excited about all of the possibilities and certainties that this school year brings. In fact, I am editing many of the things I want to share! Please attend PTSA meetings for continual updates and for opportunities to share your thoughts and questions. Also, I can be reached at janderson@spusd.net. Go, Tigers!