

September 5, 2023

Blog – Start of the School Year

The new school year has now started. Parents and students were able to come to school on Wednesday, August 30 to get their class schedules, visit their lockers, see their teachers and eat some ice cream. On Friday, September 1, school was back in session with students and staff starting to create bonds and relationships that will generate great learning experiences throughout the year.

Though summer is now unofficially over, fall is set to be a great season! The air is cooler and crisper, so bedroom windows can be open to let in the pleasant night breeze. The school days are filled with learning. New doors of exploration and discovery are opening for our students and new friendships and relationships are being created.

When staff came back to start this new school year on August 24, Zach Knutson, our School Board President, was able to welcome back our staff. Once he was finished, I had the opportunity to talk to the staff and tell them my thoughts, hopes and expectations for the upcoming year. I must admit that I still get nervous doing this, even after twenty-eight years, but I also have a tremendous sense of excitement each time I get to interact with the people who make school a special place to work and learn. I let the staff know that my internal feelings are much like when I used to get ready for a race, my stomach would turn in knots up until the gun went off and then once the race was started all my butterflies went away. When I speak in public, it is much the same, I get all sorts of butterflies until I start to speak and then they go away.

During my talk with the staff, I wanted to bring up some important points as we go forward. First, is that we are back to school as a TEAM. Each of our jobs are important for the mission of the school to be accomplished – my role as superintendent is not any more important than anyone else’s role in the District – it is just a different role. If everyone does their role to the best of their ability – then the District will move forward and accomplish great things for our students and community. If not, then our progress will be limited.

Second, I feel so bad when someone makes the statement, “I’m just a (bus driver, secretary, custodian, food service personnel, educational assistant, coach/advisor, teacher, principal, superintendent or board member).” As I mentioned above, all of our roles are important and necessary for the Parkview School District to move forward. I wish our bus drivers could have attended our opening presentation because it would have given me the chance to remind them that they are the very first and last people that many of our children will see each day. If they greet the child with a smile and friendly good morning, this simple action can brighten the start of their day. If when the students are getting off the bus they wish them a good night, it might take the edge off of any negative thing that might have happened during the day. During the middle of the day as our students eat lunch, our food service personnel create a nutritious meal for our students to give them the energy they need for their afternoon studies and activities. If they serve the meal with a smile, it makes the meal that much more tasty and meaningful. As a student, I remember the cooks talking with us as we went through the line and I knew they took a personal interest in each of us because they knew which students needed just that little bit extra to get them through the day and they made sure each student got what they needed. The

custodians always seemed to be around to help us when our lockers wouldn't work or we accidentally spilled something and they always seemed to be interested in how we were doing both in school and in our co-curricular activities. The secretaries were the people we went to when we really needed help and they knew just how to help us. Teachers and our support staff were not only our instructors, but they also served as our mentors. I think many of us went into education because of the impact an educator had on our lives. I remember one of my seventh grade teachers Mr. Anderson (no relation) who felt that I should pursue a career in oceanography because he felt that this is where some of our great future needs would be addressed. I never went into the field, but I never forgot the interest that he played in my life. During my opening address, I stressed – WE ARE ALL IMPORTANT. We also need to show by our words and actions that we care for each and every one of the children that pass through our doors – they need us and we need them.

I know that I owe my success to the people who have worked with me throughout my life. As I tell my wife, my greatest leadership trait is to surround myself with people who are smarter and more skilled than me. I remind her that this does not diminish my intelligence, skills or abilities; but rather it recognizes the tremendous importance that others have in our lives. In the time I have been in Parkview, I have had the opportunity to meet and work beside many wonderful people. The Board has been extremely supportive and the office staff and administrators have shown me that they are truly top-notch individuals who love what they do and want to make this upcoming year as successful as possible.

Summer might be coming to an end, but the start of a wonderful and exciting school year is just beginning!! I am looking forward to a great school year. I know that by working together we can overcome whatever issues we face and can work to make this the School District that you have been proud of in the past and will continue to be proud of in the future.