

September 30, 2020

Greetings

Thank you for your efforts to get us to the end of the 1st quarter (Almost). It has been a heavy lift to open school, adjust the schedules, adapt to new reporting requirements and stay safe doing it all.

And WOW! The Open House events were terrific. I visited just a handful of classrooms, got on a few video calls and emailed a few of you. It was terrific. I recommend you visit those link pages of your colleagues and admire each other's work. If you would have said 8 months ago that every CUHSD teacher would produce a video, post it and be live for a Q&A, I would never have believed it. Yet, you did it. Thanks to our teachers and leaders that organized, provided technical support and much more to make this event a success and be so instantly available to families. Well done!

I want to talk about grace. Grace is defined by Dictionary.com as:

noun

elegance or beauty of form, manner, motion, or action:

We watched her skate with effortless grace across the ice.

a pleasing or attractive quality or endowment:

He lacked the manly graces.

favor or goodwill.

a manifestation of favor, especially by a superior:

It was only through the dean's grace that I wasn't expelled from school.

verb (used with object), graced, grac-ing.

to lend or add grace to; [adorn](#):

Many fine paintings graced the rooms of the house.

to favor or honor:

This is a true story of no grace: A teacher (not in our community) was hosting a live video class online. He called on a student. The student looked down and did not respond. The teacher asked again. The student still had his head down and did not respond. Finally, the teacher called the student's name and said, "If you don't answer, I am kicking you off the call". And when the student looked up, but said nothing, he was kicked off the call.

The student was gone. His classmates then told the teacher, "He doesn't speak English and was trying to translate what you said on his phone."

A few lessons learned:

1. Know your students and their needs. Had this teacher taken the time to know his students, he would have had a plan in place to give the student time to respond or use another strategy for EL students
2. Practice patience, give students time to think or get help

Here is another true story of grace: A teacher saw they had more Ds and Fs than ever before this month. He recognized he needed to do something and just inviting them to an after school make up session was not enough to actually make a difference. This teacher developed an intervention contract and sent it to the parent and student at progress grades. This PDF document became a contract, that if the student came to the sessions and made up the work, they would raise their grades. Due dates were adjusted, support provided and students were given a pathway out of a failing grade. The teacher provided a safety-net and in many ways hope.

A few lessons learned:

1. The teacher has to adjust patterns and give allowances so that late and missing work is accepted

2. The teacher communicated to the student and parent that they are willing to help the student get out of this status, but it is not for free.
3. Holding students accountable includes giving a student the way to get out of a negative grade. The assignments were not waived away.
4. In the end, learning is the most important part of attending school

Show others and yourself grace:

In this storm of a pandemic, we each have our own ship. Some of us have little rafts, and others larger ships. Some of us have been inconvenienced and others deeply impacted by loss of loved ones or friends. Take time to make sure those around you and yourself are good. (See the attached documents that are in English and Spanish.) Take time to walk away from the computer screen, check in on others, and know that you are doing your best. Our District's success begins with you being well. If our employees are ill, overly stressed and not able to cope, then we cannot come to work and nothing is done. Wisely, the Wellness Committee was established years ago to support employees. There are resources on the HR page if you need help. <http://www.cuhsd.net/Departments/Human-ResourcesPayroll/index.html>. There is grace enough for all, there is grace for you.

Moving Forward:

When the county moves from Purple (wide spread COVID19) to Red (substantial spread COVID19) status, we can begin to bring high school students on to campus in small numbers. This is not likely until late into the Fall, or in January. Nearly all of our Classified staff have returned to their job sites daily or very regularly to work. In contrast, most teachers have been working entirely from home. I strongly encourage our teachers to reestablish the routine of coming to work and work from your classroom once or twice a week. We will all need to be comfortable in our new normal. Teachers will be some of the first to welcome students back to campus and we need to be ready to do so with confidence.

There is great work happening all around us. Let's call attention to it:

- **Congratulations to Karen Siakon** who was recognized as Teacher of the Month by the folks at Reason to Teach Podcast. (You may recognize the voices of a few of the contributors.) Karen is very deserving of this recognition. Listen in: <https://bit.ly/346xQdF>
- **SHS Senior, P. Valenzuela**, had an article published in the IV Press: It's insightful and beautiful. <https://bit.ly/34dkVaa>

One final thought: We have a lot of lemons around us. Don't be sour. If you have lemons (challenges), squeeze them (purpose and effort), add some sugar (grace) and let's make lemonade!

Stay Safe,

Ward H. Andrus, Ed. D.

Superintendent

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"Simplicity is the ultimate sophistication" Leonardo Da Vinci