

Evidence it'll be a great school year!

By Eimear O'Brien, Ed.D.
Superintendent

THE school year is underway, and our campuses are abuzz with excitement and energy that tells me it is going to be a great school year! That's a bold claim to make, especially when we have only been in school for a few weeks. Even so, I know it's true.



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I could tell in the smiling faces and enthusiasm demonstrated by members of the Clovis East High leadership class I saw on campus at 6:30 a.m. the first day of school. They all wore brightly colored shirts that loudly proclaimed "Hello!" and identified them as a friendly face ready to help make their peers feel comfortable. In under a half an hour I watched them transform the campus with signage, balloons and pom poms signaling their excitement for a new year. Shortly after they finished, more than 4,400 students arrived on the Reagan Educational Center campus and were met with visible reminders that every one of them is welcome and cared about.

I heard it in the laughter and chattering young voices underlying the peal of Jefferson Elementary's original school bell, rung promptly at 8:15 a.m. on the first day of school to celebrate the start of another year. Before hundreds of students and parents, the bell rung out with sweet, clear notes that reminded all of us that the school year is an important part of the rhythm of our entire community. Jefferson Elementary is 138 years old, and for that long, the same bell has called students to learn and grow. Building Tomorrow Today is our theme this year, and Jefferson's

bell ringing ceremony had a particular poignancy given its resonant reminder that the kids who attend our schools are the future citizens of our community.

More evidence was found at every school campus onto which I stepped during the first week of school.

At one school, the principal proudly described to me how her amazing teachers had stepped up to solve a staffing puzzle. Several teachers willingly offered to change their grade level assignments in a stairstep shuffle to address the school's needs for both a new kindergarten teacher and a reduction of its fifth-grade

team by one. The team came together to help decorate the new classroom, so our kindergarten students had a beautiful and welcoming classroom on the first day of school. This experience reminds me that our schools are served by thoughtful and creative educators who are willing to go above and beyond, and who look for every chance to do what's right for our students and to help one another.

I even saw it on the kindergarten "red carpet" at Bud Rank Elementary in the teary face of a student who wasn't quite ready to say good-bye to his mom. After three or four tries at farewell, each culminating in hugs,

reassurances and tears, this young man was drawn into the classroom with compassion, humor and tenderness by the kindergarten team. Their friendly faces and soothing confidence helped transition worry and fear to eagerness and wonder in the classroom.

I attended a gathering of our Transportation team and heard that once again, our bus drivers who transport over 700 students with disabilities went out to every home and personally introduced themselves to the family to make sure they knew their child would be cared for during their journey to and from school.

On another occasion, I joined

our Plant Operations team and heard about the lengths our custodial, maintenance and grounds staff went to in order to get our schools ready for the new school year. I am in awe of the 60 construction projects that occurred over the summer to continue to keep our schools and grounds updated and safe to meet the needs of our students returning to school.

In Clovis Unified, we have a tradition that founding superintendent "Doc" Buchanan started 62 years ago, where the superintendent personally interviews every single teacher, and this summer, I completed almost 200 interviews that included nurses, school psychologists, counselors and more. I can personally attest to you, our community, that in Clovis Unified, we continue to hold our standards very high, and to bring on the best role models to place in our classrooms and schools. Doc used to say, "If you want to develop winners, you've got to surround our children with winners" and our students need more than ever to be supported by us all in navigating the complexities of their lives.

As I look around at our educational team and reflect on the weight of the responsibility that I have as your superintendent, I am once again reminded that we have the most wonderful educational team working hard to provide your children with an exemplary education. Every employee in our district is positioned to make a positive impact on our students, and that's why I always remind them that every employee is an educator!

And you, our families, our Governing Board, and our community are our partners. What an awesome opportunity for us to join together and take close to 43,000 students to great heights as we build their tomorrows today. Teamwork and Trust is one of our core values in Clovis Unified, and I am excited to lead us all TOGETHER through another great school year!

LESSONS

Inspirations by, for and from our CUSD students



Special to CUSD Today/Kenny Gilman

Students at Clovis High are greeted on the first day of school with cheering and celebration.

"A smile is the universal welcome."

MAX EASTMAN, AMERICAN WRITER