

This time of year is always busy in the schools. Halloween parties, scheduling around Thanksgiving Break, preparing for the crush of December activities, projects, testing, and programs.

This year, with the return to the regular schedule of five-day in-person instruction, we have all of those elements and added pressures of covering one another's classes when there is no substitute to be found or volunteering to drive an activity bus when we are short bus drivers. Managing the complexities of educating all students, even those who are quarantined was an aspect we may have tackled last year but we no longer have the benefit of a shortened school day or remote Wednesdays in which to manage the increased workload.

As educators, the teachers of PLT stand by the assertion that class time is *not* just an academic exercise but one where students learn social skills, habits of schooling, and personal development. And while the news and even ISBE throws around terms like *Learning Loss*, we see on a daily basis the more accurate descriptor of *Learning Impact*. It isn't *learning loss* because students didn't lose knowledge.

But their learning has absolutely been impacted.

The ability to sit through a class session has been impacted.

Their use of schooling behaviors like managing assignments, turning things in on time, taking notes, raising hands and speaking in turn, participating in class discussions aloud, all have been impacted.

Their time management, social interactions, and classroom behaviors have all been impacted.

So, while teachers from pre K all the way to senior high are still plugging away at the academic aspects of the school day and working to educate our students, they are also **re**acquainting students to classroom behaviors, social behaviors, and academic routines. But they do it, day in and day out, knowing that this **reacclimation** to the classroom is crucial for academic and career success.

This year, the *curriculum* is not at all the same. **It is so much more.** Behaviors that took years to learn took only 18 months to *unlearn*. But they are being painstakingly reintroduced.

Because teaching is more than an academic subject or an intellectual exercise. The teachers of this district strive to educate the *whole* student, recognizing that this year, *that looks a lot different, takes a lot longer, and requires entirely different methods.*

The teachers are thankful for the support provided by parents, grandparents, and guardians. We hope that the families, administrators, and board recognize that this year, while being, on the surface, a return to regular schooling, it is like no year ever before, with unique pressures and unforeseeable obstacles.

And it is all being done by teachers who are *themselves* dealing with the pressures of the current educational climate, the dangers of COVID, and the rigors of being all-hands-on-deck for 20 months.

And last week, a teacher told me about a second grader who had a breakthrough with phonics and, for the first time ever, identified himself as a reader. That one student in one comment in one class is the product of months of hard work instruction, attention, and care.

And moments like that are happening all over the district.

Every day.

Those quiet, unheralded achievements and successes happen and keep happening. They happen because of the partnership between the students of this district and the skilled professionals who each day take up the task of educating.