

Fun in the life of a school superintendent

Although I enjoy the challenges of my job as superintendent, I do miss interacting with students, the energy that seems to fill a school building, and those “a-ha” moments when a child understands the lesson at hand.

So I make it a practice to visit the schools to see what’s happening whenever possible. Here are a few of my recent observations:

Kennedy Primary

It was quite obvious that “pajama day” was underway at Kennedy. This special day added to the fun and the classrooms were alive with learning:

- Classroom 1: a discussion of different feelings, sad, happy, etc. was underway.
- Classroom 2: students were receiving gourds for a hands-on project.
- Classroom 3: lots of “r” sounds in the room as students were practicing their phonics skills.
- Classroom 4: as students talked about building stamina, they were also charting minutes on a bar graph.
- In other classrooms, special education teachers were guiding students on projects in a large group, and reading specialists were working with small groups of students on specific letters with sounds.

McKinley

From friendly greetings, to adults overseeing a child who was not feeling well, to a custodian interacting with a student in the hall—this was definitely a welcoming environment. In one classroom a student proudly wore a birthday crown, while others were busy working throughout the building:

- Classroom 1: students were working on phonics skills.
- Special education: small group work was underway with adults intermingled among students as they defined and tackled a project.
- Classroom 2: while some students were reading in books or on their iPads, the teacher worked with small groups on specific skills.
- Classroom 3 & 4: teacher-led large group learning and discussion about the constitution and how a bill is created.

Garfield:

At Garfield, I ran into Mrs. Elliott, the former Kennedy principal who was substituting in a fourth grade class. Seems that she, too, misses the interaction with students.

- Some students were gearing up for lunch and transitioning within the building.
- Others were in the hall working on nouns. I asked one student what a noun was and he promptly said, “A person, place or thing.”

AMS

- Classroom 1: students were working on summarizing as they practiced condensing materials in their own words.
- Classroom 2: as students learned about Plains Indian tribes and early explorers, they used their iPads to locate information on an educational internet site.
- Classroom 3: students were studying propaganda and learning the importance of "critical thinking."

AHS

- Students were working on mechanical drafting in one class, developing 3-D images and learning how to plot them so they could be manipulated and viewed.
- In an English class, students were reading and discussing myths.
- As I walked through the science hall, there was caution tape on one end with the outline of a body on the floor and a red substance splattered around. Students were investigating a crime doing "fake" blood typing and learning how to collect evidence.
- I walked by one room and didn't understand anything the teachers or students were talking about because it was all in German.
- In the high school office, students were interacting with the administration and staging photos for the yearbook and Booster. Mr. Smith and Mr. Burton willingly obliged when asked to pose as BFFs (Best Friends Forever). As instructed they each curved one hand and then joined them together to create a heart!

Visiting classrooms is always fun for me. It certainly reminds me why we are in the business of education.