

TIGER PAUSE
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Our days around school can be pretty hectic. There is a fast pace and there are a lot of people to serve. Sometimes, meetings and the “business” part of running school seem to mount a takeover. When I was principal at Marengo Elementary School, on the days that seemed overloaded with non-student contact, if I only had a small amount of time to get out to classes, I would run to the kindergarten where my outlook was sure to be instantly transformed.

When I first came back to SPHS, I found that the place I liked to go in such situations was the wood shop. There, I could always find an interesting mix of students who were working together, cooperating to achieve success on each of their projects. It was a world, not unlike kindergarten, in which all focus was on the task at hand, and differences did not matter. What mattered was the common bond between the various and diverse students in the class.

Recently, as I was giving a school tour, I found myself telling the group about how much I liked to go into the wood shop, as I had the kindergarten. At the moment of the telling, I felt like I could actually see a light bulb go on over my head. By putting my thoughts into words, I realized that no longer is the wood shop one of few places on campus where that sense of teamwork, cooperation, mission, and hands-on learning was taking place; that sense is now school-wide. I can go into nearly any class, lab, or instructional area and find the students and teachers working together toward common goals. Learning is often structured around real-life applications and problem-solving, and the work of others is honored and appreciated. This is life at SPHS.

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I hope you are all finding our new web site useful. We were introduced to the new system just before the start of school and, thanks to training provided by our own teachers and PCC freshman Tommy Ettinger, we were able to get started on good footing. We have a few teachers and coaches who are still in learning mode, so we are supporting their efforts toward mastery. Overall, users have been very positive about the site and its viability.

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Those of you who attended our last two PTSA meetings had an opportunity to hear about “Everything You Need to Know about SPHS,” ask thought-provoking questions and get answers, and meet our Superintendent, Brian Bristol. For those of you who were not able to attend, let me summarize by saying that our students and staff have been very busy with academics and those activities that make our school so special. Faculty members have attended many workshops and curriculum in-service days (on topics such as 10th and 11th grade English and Social Studies curriculum mapping, enduring understandings, and assessments; Math and Science inquiry; Standards-based instruction for our ROP classes; Results Based Counseling; Alternative Education;

writing performances, and more). Many students are deeply involved in the creation of virtual corporations that will attend a trade fair in Bakersfield at the end of November as part of the Virtual Business course. The PSAT, SAT, class projects, and daily learning experiences are keeping others engaged. Add to that festivities like this year's extremely successful and positive Color Day and the school-wide efforts toward Homecoming, athletics and clubs, and you'll see how consuming life as a Tiger can be. Some evidence can be found in the Photos section of our web site (sphstigers.org).

As I continue to find joy in each day at SPHS, I welcome your input and questions and can be reached at janderson@fc.spusd.net. On behalf of the entire SPHS faculty and staff, I wish you each a warm and wonderful Thanksgiving.