

Tiger Pause
January/February 2006

Happy 2006!

In a conversation with a student this week, she was remarking that as we age, time goes faster and we get slower. I shared the eerie feeling of being able to look back and identify decades and eras within my own lifetime. Instead of “I remember about five years ago...” it becomes, “Now, back in the 80s, I think it was....” Time really is a remarkable concept.

At this time last year, we were horrified by the catastrophic events of the South Asia tsunami. Who knew then that our own country’s southern section would likewise face devastation from nature? In between those events and since, challenges continued to face us, both locally and globally. What has been reaffirming, however, is how loved ones and strangers have committed themselves to assisting in the tough times. Here at SPHS, we have seen, first-hand, the willingness of our students and school community to rally to the aid of those in need.

On campus, I believe we have more social outreach programs than ever before. Most of the new clubs established this year are service-based. I marveled at that trend as I signed the club charters this fall. With each batch of activity proposals I evaluate, a large proportion of them are geared to outreach programs. Through thrice-yearly (and extremely successful) blood drives, tsunami aid, Hurricane Katrina Relief Concert and backpack drive, Operation Parris (for a family that lost all to Katrina), Pennies for Patients, Villa Gardens visits, Help for the Hopeless drives, and many more efforts, students demonstrate thought and action for others. Many of our seniors, in evaluating their college options, are purposely selecting institutions in which they can continue their altruistic endeavors. How reassuring that social consciousness has taken root in this generation! The parents and teachers who have promoted that sensibility and call to action should be proud. We had several opportunities in 2005 to see adults model community and communal spirit for their children, and there is a direct connection between that and the teens’ behavior.

Of note:

- ❖ In November, we had an extremely well attended and wonderfully informational College and Career Night. That was followed by Part I of our Financial Aid Night. Part II is coming up on January 18. Please make a note of that date.
- ❖ We seem to be on more stable footing in regard to technology. Beginning with the first day of school, we had some major problems, but now we will be able to implement, school-wide, our student information system that will provide private and timely information for parents regarding their own student’s attendance and achievement.

- ❖ Our District web site is getting a facelift and upgrade. It will become more user friendly, as will our HS web site. This is a *process*, but one we are committed to seeing through in order to provide more direct communication.
- ❖ On December 1, our School Site Council approved our school's Single Plan for Student Achievement, a document that each school creates using test data to identify areas of needed improvement and to plan specific goals to address those needs. I will be presenting the Single Plan at the January 12, 2006, Board of Education meeting, along with the other four SPUSD principals.
- ❖ In October, our staff spent its Professional Development Day on visioning with our "Critical Friend," Jim Davis, and continuing with Stages I and II of *Understanding by Design*, a method for planning standards-based units of study around essential questions and desired outcomes. On our January 17th Professional Development Day, the entire faculty and staff of SPUSD will convene at SPSHS to learn about Developmental Assets. We are all excited to work together as a district to recognize and enhance our students' attributes (and it's in alignment with our WASC goals!). There will be a parent program on Developmental Assets that same night at 7:00, also in our auditorium.
- ❖ First semester finals are January 24-26, and our new semester begins with an "odd" day on Monday, January 30.
- ❖ As you have probably heard by now, our District is facing financial hardship. Tough choices will have to be made in order to get us on even ground as fiduciaries. I am optimistic that all members of the school community can work together to focus on instructional and programmatic priorities in order to make thoughtful choices as we look carefully at our bottom line.

Looking forward to a challenging, yet rewarding, year for all of us, I can be reached at janderson@fc.spusd.net. Again, best wishes for a happy and healthy 2006!