

Astro Blast

Week of January 30-February 3



This Week at Carr (1/30/17-2/3/17)

	All Week	MAP Math Test	Math Classes
1/30	Monday	School Site Council	2:45
1/31	Tuesday	Modified Day	
1/31	Tuesday	Rewards Training	301 – All day
1/31	Tuesday	AVID Meeting	510
2/1	Wednesday	Staff Meeting	1:45/Library
2/2	Thursday	Modified Day	
2/2	Thursday	End of Semester	
2/3	Friday	1 st Day of 2 nd Semester	

Now that we are back from winter break, one thing I have observed in classrooms is re-norming the students, reminding our students of our behavioral expectations and practicing these PBIS strategies after three weeks off. It's always appropriate to have students practice coming into our classrooms if that is what they need. Dismissing students by table or group also reinforces our authority over them and it dissuades students from running during passing period. The rain in the past few weeks has also changed some of our procedures, but I do think it's important to clamp down on our students sooner rather than later so that when the second semester begins, they will be mentally prepared to do well academically. Our 8th grade students' parent meetings will be starting soon, so we want to continuously remind all students that the expectation is for them to have a GPA of at least 2.5 and for them to be sure to pass their Language Arts and Math classes with a C or better.

I want to share more about my thoughts and feelings because someone recently told me that they find me hard to read. I'll start with something that happened with my kids and how it relates to me and my philosophy of education. My sons had been asking me for a gym membership for over a year. I kept saying no because statistically people stop going to the gym after just a few weeks and then pay for a few more months before cancelling. Although the idea of working out appealed to me, I was pretty sure we would stop going and we would waste the money. During the break I changed my mind because I realized this would be a good opportunity for me to spend more time with my sons. This weekend while working out we began a conversation about learning and the motivation to do so. My sons wanted to know why I am so driven. I shared with them that my life experiences have led me to believe that learning is the key to improving one's station in life. I

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believe that we can use knowledge, hard work and dedication to overcome any obstacle. I believe this because I have lived it. Growing up poor in a family with six siblings was difficult. My parents came to this country because they believed that we could get an education and improve our lives; they were right. Education was the ticket to a better life for me and my family. When I see our students, I see myself. I know the challenge they face and I feel a great obligation to improve their chances for success. I feel that in order to do this, I must search for the keys to motivating you, our teachers, to go beyond your current knowledge and effectiveness. I know that this is asking for a lot. You already work at one of the most challenging schools in the county, you care so much about our students that sometimes it actually hurts. I feel guilty asking you to do more, but I know we must change what we are doing in order to get better results. It doesn't mean that you aren't working hard or that you aren't dedicated. It just means that we are working within a system that is constrained and has many flaws. I know that pushing for change adds to the stress level and the anxiety we all feel. I know this begins to diminish your happiness which may lead to a diminished effectiveness, so I try to find balance in what we do. I know that I am not always successful, but I try to learn from my mistakes. I look to affirm the dedication and hard work that you do every day, while keeping our eye on improving each year.

Speaking of learning, our second group is preparing to visit Lindsay in about a month. I know that there is some apprehension about what may or may not happen next year regarding the curriculum and the direction we are moving in. Our path towards proficiency-based learning, in my mind, is a journey where we continuously learn from others and help our students to reach their own personal potential by providing them with learning that reaches them where they are. I don't believe that we will recreate what Lindsay or any other school or district has but rather start with ideas, share them with each other, develop them and continuously refine our practices.

I saw an example of this last week, when Mr. Halewijn and Ms. Miranda visited Ms. Leal's and Ms. Hutchens's classrooms as Ms. Leal and Ms. Hutchens taught a reading program called Six Minute Solutions. Afterwards, all four teachers were able to get together to see how they each might implement the program in their classrooms. I loved seeing the teachers' collaborative conversation and am looking forward to seeing how each of them might use this program or other ideas that they shared with each other in their classrooms. Many of us have settled on something that works for us in our classrooms, but maybe there is something that works a little better this year, with this class. I think that as we work towards proficiency-based learning, we will find pieces of curriculum that work for our students as a whole or as individuals. The advantage of Personalized Learning is

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that when we find something we think is even better for some students than what we had been providing, we can give students that option in their learning path as well. Ms. Wedekind discovered that Canvas has a built in ability to support Personalized Learning. You can create Mastery Pathways for students to access content that meets them where they are on the learning continuum. I hope that as we embark on this journey, you will share with your colleagues and with me what is working or not working in your own classroom so that we can use our collective knowledge in creating a dynamic Personalized Learning that will benefit our students and help them to reach their potential.