

PRESIDENT'S REPORT MARCH 20, 2017

It has been a real pleasure visiting some of our district's schools from the end of February and then throughout the month of March. Tonight, I will just report on 2 of those visits, because we saw so much, I don't want to overwhelm people! Next month, I'll report out on 2 more visits.

The first school I had the pleasure of touring was MMS. Principal Wolfson and his faculty were excited to host the visit, and we found a vibrant, focused learning community, and a warm and inviting school. We experienced "Gameifying the classroom" occurring in real time in both an 8th grade US History class and an ELA class, leading to an increase in student engagement in the learning process.

While visiting both an 8th grade Math classroom and an 8th grade Conceptual Physics classroom, we were part of a more traditional setting that had solid examples of higher order questioning and active student responses. Both teachers made efforts to tie abstract concepts into relevant examples in the student's lives, answering the age-old question – "When am I ever going to use this?"

Art students were actively engaged in art projects producing high quality work that is on display throughout our building, and the chorus classroom was soliciting student input on the final pieces being selected for the Spring concert to keep student engagement high. In 7th grade biology, students were patiently waiting for "something" to grow in the petri dishes in the back of the room showing the type of hands-on, STEM related activities prevalent throughout the curriculum. 7th grade English students were actively involved in the writing process, discussing what it meant to plagiarize others' work and how to avoid it.

The school's administration and teachers embrace the opportunities presented by the ever-changing student body with a commitment of providing "the best education possible to each and every student."

At JES, Principal Shaw led the tour. What we observed in less than one hour made my head spin! We started with 1st grade's Lebo Time, where we saw flexible grouping meeting the needs of all learners. Students rotated through stations and were enthusiastically engaged in activities specific to their needs. 2nd grade students were "warming up their brains" for the day by answering brain quest trivia questions; in a 2nd grade science class, students were learning about liquids and solids, having read Bartholomew and the Oobleck in honor of Dr. Seuss' birthday. The students made predictions about Oobleck being a liquid or a solid; after making the Oobleck, with the assistance of parent volunteers, students discussed their findings.(It's both!)

In the Kindergarten classroom, students had just finished a weather project in science class, discussing March coming in like a lion and going out like a lamb.They then moved onto a math warm up, using either a takeaway method or the number line method.

FLES was alive in well in 3rd grade, where students have been learning verbs and telling time. The students self evaluate their writing using a rubric that the teacher created to help the students focus on the expectations of the lesson and their learning. 3rd Grade art students were learning about David Kracov, an American painter, animator and sculptor. Well-known for his metal wall sculptures, the students were working on designing their own hot air balloon wall sculpture. Another 3rd grade was reviewing comparative and superlative adjectives using classroom discussion and the smart board. The students were excited to participate in describing the difference between these adjectives.

The JES 5th Grade class we popped into had students working in groups to develop directions about how to solve the problems of multiplying and dividing exponents. The students presented their thinking for arriving at a solution to the entire class.

JES 4th Graders were learning about fractions in a set in math class. Students in one class were explaining their thinking to the class using the smart board. Students in the other class were finishing up their math stations. During math stations there was a small group of students engaging in guided practice and instruction with the teacher. Some students were working independently solving problems while other students were working through math practice using the Chromebooks.

We completed our tour by checking out a raised bed vegetable garden on the back playground, thanks to a grant from Let's Move Pittsburgh and Phipps Conservatory and to a very generous donation from Yard to Table Garden Builders (Mt. Lebanon based small business). The garden is large enough to host an entire class and will have teaching and planting stations. It is a great opportunity for students to develop an interest in planting, growing, healthy eating, sustainable living, and giving back to the community.

My thanks to the Dr. Davis and Dr. Irvin for making these visits possible; to our school principals for welcoming my visit, to all of the teachers who greeted our brief interruption as an opportunity to highlight their students' work, and to the students....our bosses....for exhibiting teamwork, showcasing problem solving, reveling in creativity, and thriving in both group and independent activities. You are all doing fantastic work! Learning is alive and well in Mt. Lebanon Schools!

Introduction of Sloane Astorino to present Sue Harper Award

After spending the past few weeks experiencing the excellent work of our teachers in their classrooms, I am pleased to introduce our Director of Advancement, Sloane Astorino, who will present the first Sue Harper Endowed Teaching Award.

Introduction of Jason Cheskawich: Wind Ensemble performance

The Mt. Lebanon High School Wind Ensemble was invited to perform by audition at the Music for All National Concert Festival in Indianapolis, Indiana on March 9-11. I would like to introduce Mr. Jason Cheskawich, our high school band director, to share more about the successful trip.

Extra Mile Award

Thank you, Mr. Cheskawich. Congratulations on another great success for the band. Now, I have a lovely surprise for you. I very am pleased to announce that you have been nominated for an Extra Mile Award by Mrs. Jodi Kubit and we would like to present this award to you this evening.

In her nomination Mrs. Kubit writes, "In addition to the many concerts and events that Mr. Cheskawich coordinates to promote our high school musicians and our community, such as the exceptionally successful United States Air Force Singing Sergeants Concert this fall, he tirelessly works over the summer and all throughout the fall to make sure our students put on the best show that they can for our students, parents and community during football season. They work hard, but they have fun too. At the same time, he runs concert band and wind ensemble classes and concerts, teaches music theory and music technology and has multiple small ensembles that he directs. Mr. Cheskawich reaches out to our younger students in the district in hopes of them continuing their pursuit of music in high school. He hosts the 5th grade band students from across the district at a football game and the 8th grade band students at our band festival. He sends current high school students to the middle school to talk to eighth graders about joining band at high school. He even invited 8th grade band members to serve as ushers at a high school concert so that they could start connecting with the high school. He is always looking for ways to keep kids involved in his passion - music.

Mr. Cheskawich continues to be a strong advocate for fine arts education in our district. At concerts he often speaks about how thankful he is that Mt. Lebanon supports Fine Arts the way they do.

To summarize, I am nominating Mr. Cheskawich because I think that he goes the Extra Mile for our students every day and this year he probably went an Extra Few Miles! He does it because of his love of teaching music and of fine arts and I would love to see him be recognized for what he did for our students and our district this year."

Mr. Cheskawich, please come forward so we may give you a pin and certificate to show our appreciation for all that you do for our students.