

What's in a Name?

By David Truitt, Superintendent

Two Sundays ago, Dr. John Crowder preached a sermon at First Baptist West titled, "What's in a Name?" His sermon centered on a theme found in the Book of Daniel, Chapter 1, about names, their meaning, and what they represent. He shared stories about the significance of several Biblical names, and how names are important labels; important to family, friends, coworkers, other community members, and our God. Dr. Crowder's goal was to ensure we remembered the history and life-experiences behind our name, and that we should never let the world or others define who we are or change in any way all that our name represents. Names truly speak of who we are and define our true identity and worth.

His sermon got me thinking about the importance of names in my life. Of course, I immediately thought of my own name and the names of my immediate family members. When folks around West hear the name "David Truitt", my hope is that they think of how I try to live my life; a life centered on Jesus Christ, my family, and the mighty Trojans. I also hope my name rings something in their mind about integrity, serving others, and always trying to keep the kids of West ISD at the forefront of our work, mind, and hearts. This thought is what really got me wondering what is truly in a "name". I kept thinking over and over again about what it means to be a "West Trojan".

As you know and have heard me say over and over again, we have great kids in West ISD. I have lived in Houston, Waco, Katy, and Waxahachie and worked with thousands of kids and families over the life of my educational career, and I believe I know great kids when I see and work with them on a daily basis. Yes, we have a few kids who do not always make wise choices, but, overall, we have incredible kids in our schools. As I think about our kids, my thoughts always move to their lives after West ISD; specifically life after graduation. I often wonder what our kids will do with their lives after Dr. Larry Sparks, our Board President, hands them their diplomas at Baylor's Ferrell Center on graduation day. They have their whole lives ahead of them! Whether they pursue a two- or four- year degree, technical training or licensing, military service, or immediate job placement, I want to ensure our kids are truly ready, willing, and able to take life by storm. With all of these college and career options on the table, I want to know that any professor, director, business owner, trainer, supervisor, or officer believes without a doubt that all West Trojans are ready for whatever challenges come their way. When I ask Dr. Crowder's question in this scenario, my twist on his challenge centers on what is in the "West Trojan" name. More specifically, when folks hear the word "West", what does that mean or represent to them. In other words, does the West Trojan name truly speak of who we are and what we believe?

Fortunately, our Board went through an amazing training exercise a few years ago with Dr. Marty Crawford where they defined the vision, mission, and work of West ISD. They also defined what a graduate of West High School should look like to the world. This outline of traits and skills was called the "Portrait of a West ISD Graduate." Through their work, the Board defined a West High School graduate as:

PREPARED ACADEMICALLY

- Skilled in math, science, and technology
- Engaged in the humanities, arts and other disciplines of choice
- Possess a sense of history, geography, global politics
- Prepared, eligible for, and accepted to college/post-secondary

AN EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATOR

- Proficient writer, reader, speaker, and listener
- Proficient in the vocabulary and language of academic disciplines
- Proficient in two or more languages

PREPARED FOR LIFE AND CAREER

- Responsible and trustworthy
- Work effectively with others
- Confident and motivated to set and achieve goals
- Possess personal financial literacy
- Prepared to take the next step in life
- Dedicated to school/community engagement and service

Wow... I love this list! At West ISD, we confirm attainment of our mission and vision when each West High School graduate meets these traits. This goal shows the world that our students are academically prepared for college or post-secondary opportunities and possess the skills and habits needed to be successful in life and a career in the 21st century world they will encounter. Now, stop and take a moment to think about our past and recent graduates and more specifically... the Class of 2017. Are our graduates living up to the "West Trojan" name? Are they living lives of significance? Have they meet that standard outlined in our Portrait of a West ISD Graduate? Are they ready for whatever challenges come their way? I believe the community of West already knows the answer. We are WEST! Continue to rise up, Trojans!