

The Echo Chamber

Article by Dr. Greg Plutko, Superintendent

Did you hear that hammering noise? Yes, they are starting to assemble the diploma stages for all of our graduations! The end of each school year is always filled with a special energy and excitement for the celebration of our students, teachers, and families. It brings with it a time to reflect on the amazing accomplishments of our students as they take that last step off of the graduation stage and simultaneously stride into a new life adventure...and their records of achievement highlight their readiness for the journey.

As I reflect on the year and that “readiness for journey,” I am immediately connected to the high quality teaching and learning that pours into our classrooms each school day. The importance of providing a diversity of classroom settings is becoming even more vital as we enter a new age of technology and learning. Recently, I was able to hear a speech by world-renowned photographer Platon. If you have a moment, I would encourage you to visit his website or see one of his thoughtful presentations on YouTube (Platonphoto.com).

Sitting in the audience, I was drawn to his powerful photographic talents. From world leaders to entertainers, his list of portraits was quite impressive. But as much as his visible talent was on display with engaging portraits, it was his words in describing our world that moved me to think even more deeply about our classrooms. Although we were too enthralled to even share whispers during his presentation, we all made the same connection to his sage words and the importance of our classrooms.

Platon spoke about our daily world becoming an “echo chamber” of ideas. In other words (and his words are more eloquent) our digital-based society has allowed for people to read or listen to only the opinions and facts they want to hear. If I were to have a particular ideology, then I could arrange to receive only those tweets, subscribe to those RSS Feeds, and even just TiVo those programs that fit my thoughts. He said it was just too easy to live in a silo of thought. Thus, the “echo chamber” is born.

This is where our classrooms must play a pivotal and vital role in the future of our students. The classroom should always represent an environment that is built for a diversity of both thoughts and expressions. A setting for students to challenge that “echo chamber” of what they might be reading or hearing from a single digital source. As author Carol Dweck would describe, the classroom will be their opportunity to resist a “fixed mindset” and instead build and live in a “growth mindset,” a definite “must” to find the success our students will seek on that newly minted path after graduation.

Wishing our entire school community all the very best as we once again prepare for final exams and get ready to honor the age-old tradition of graduation.