

# West ISD's One Word

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During our Back-to-School Convocation and District Leadership Inservice, I introduced a book titled, "One Word that Will Change your Life." This book is a quick read, but carries a powerful message. The authors are Jon Gordon, Dan Britton, and Jimmy Page. Jon Gordon also wrote "The Energy Bus" and "Training Camp." Dan Britton and Jimmy Page both work for the national Fellowship of Christian Athletes office.

The book's premise is that every organization, including a school district, has a long list of goals and action statements. In the West Independent School District, we have a vision statement, mission statement, belief statements, Portrait of a West High School Graduate, district improvement plan goals, and campus specific improvement plan goals. Though worthy work, the total page number of these documents is pretty staggering and leaves me wondering how our staff members can remember each and every goal on each and every page.

"One Word" believes that an organization can have a word that could help improve our lives and school year in an incredible way. The book also believes this "One Word" could mean the difference between repeated failures and newfound success. This "One Word" could even be our vision or theme for the entire school year and help us become the district we desire to be.

For me, the challenge was coming up with just "One Word." The book shares that 87% of adults make New Year's resolutions each year, but that by January 30, 50% end in failure. Though the resolutions are set with good intentions, they were not lasting and unforgettable. The book shares the failure was in the preparation and accountability stages. With one single word, the authors found that "One Word" creates laser-like focus that lasts. In this case... less is best. "One Word" is simplistic, brings clarity, power, and passion. For me, it came down to: who forgets one word?

The book offers a three step process to help find our "One Word." By preparing our hearts by looking in, discovering our word by looking up, and living our word by looking out, we began the process of identifying words for each team member and our district. Words like enjoy, devotion, heart, opportunity, attitude, focus, and priority came out of our work through the book's process.

For the district, I had to plug in and really look and listen to our answers to the following questions:

- What word would help move West ISD forward?
- What word exemplifies why we became educators in the first place?
- What word would help put the needs of our students first?
- What word would help make a difference in the lives of every student in West ISD?
- What word would truly help West ISD be great, an education destination?

One might think that West ISD's "One Word" might be rigor, standards, achievement, or expectations. No, after much soul searching, we are going to SERVE. The 2015-2016 "One Word" for West ISD is: serve. Anytime and anywhere, we will serve.

I believe a true servant-leader is servant first. Someone who goes the extra mile for others. It is the self-sacrifice piece of our work across the district and community. Frankly, it is why we are here and why we became educators in the first place. I also believe that servant leadership becomes situational leadership. Picture for a moment a school district where every time the phone is answered, a guest is greeted, a new student is enrolled, a tour is given, a meeting is held, an event is scheduled, and families are engaged, every West ISD staff member consciously makes the decision to serve, or treat others as they want to be treated. This is West ISD!

Whether attending an out-of-district sporting event, eating at a restaurant in Waco, going to an activity at Baylor, sitting in a session at Region 12, I want the reputation of our school district to be one of service first. When other people see a West Trojan t-shirt, visit our district, or compete against us in athletic, fine art, or academic competitions, I want everyone to remember how we are servants first. It will become a part of the culture, climate, and way of life in West ISD.

Fortunately, the key pieces are already in place. We have incredible staff members at all of our campuses. Truly wonderful people! The next steps center on everyone working together and holding each other accountable to help move our district from good to great. This school year is where the rubber meets the road. Let's get our serve on in 2015-2016! Go Service-First Trojans!