

Set Sail: Adventure Awaits in West ISD

By David Truitt, Superintendent

Wow, it's hard to believe, but the first day of school is just two weeks away. The West Middle/High School cross country teams have already started practice, and the volleyball teams have been holding tryouts. The Pride of West Marching Band started drills, and football practice is just around the corner. The first day of school is set for Wednesday, August 15, 2018, and the anticipation is high for another outstanding start to a school year. Over the past several months, the West ISD district leadership team has been working hard to help ensure this is the best first day in the history of our acclaimed school district, and a lot of the work centered on a new book study and recommitment to why we became educators many years ago.

The district-wide theme for the 2018-2019 school year is "Set Sail: Adventure Awaits." Each school year, West ISD strives to incorporate a teaching and learning theme into the excitement of the start of each new school year. Over the past two years, our community has seen superhero and construction themes used to help unite our students, staff, and parents. This new theme is based on the work of Dave and Shelley Burgess through their "Teach Like a Pirate" and "Lead Like a Pirate" books. Well, it's now "All Hands on Deck" as we strive to have another incredible school year. I hope you are ready to see loads of pirate and island themed decorations, newsletter, events, and fun!

To date, our district leadership team has found these pirate-themed books to be paradigm-shifting, culture-reshaping, life-transforming manifestos of the highest order. The authors challenged our team to implement the PIRATE leadership traits in order to change the way we lead and think about our school system in order to create schools that will both the staff and students knocking down the doors to get in. I am not talking about bloodthirsty marauders who pillage and plunder. I am talking about a mindset of great courage that inspires and influences others to follow them, even in the face of great risk. These pirates lead their crews on journeys to seek great riches and rewards, but the treasure these leaders seek isn't gold; it is much better! The treasure pirate leaders seek is the creation of schools that are amazing places for students, staff, and parents. It's about charting a course and setting sail on an incredible journey of educating our future. It's about staying calm when we hit rough seas, and letting the passion we have for learning navigate us through the challenging times. Pirate leaders are daring and adventurous, and they are willing to sail into uncharted waters with no guarantee of success. They know they have it within them to help make miracles happen for kids, so they work to create the kinds of schools where teachers are encouraged and supported to design the amazing learning experiences kids deserve. The authors state it takes passion and a commitment to immersing ourselves in the most impactful work. It takes a dedication to building rapport that supports an environment where teachers know they are trusted. It takes a strong ability to ask good questions and analyze what's going on around us. It takes a desire for transformation and the courage to implement change. Finally, it takes enthusiasm, even on long, challenging, difficult days. As you can see, this book and theme are perfect for the new school year and our work.

With the start of school comes many important dates and opportunities for our students and parents to meet their new teachers and other staff members. At West Elementary School, Prekindergarten and Kindergarten Orientation is scheduled for Thursday, August 9, 2018, at 6:00 PM. The "Meet the Teacher and Bring your School Supplies Night" is set for Monday, August 13, 2018, at two different times. Prekindergarten through Grade 2 will attend from 5:30-6:15 PM, and Grades 3 through 5 from 6:15-7:00

PM. Following this event, West Middle School is hosting its "Schedule Pick-up and Meet the Teacher Night" from 7:00-8:15 PM on this same night. From 7:00-7:30 PM, a short parent orientation is scheduled in the auditorium.

West High School has set Thursday, August 9, 2018, for FISH Camp for all incoming Grade 9 students from 12:00-2:00 PM. "Schedule Pick-Up and Meet the Teacher Night" is on this same day from 7:00-8:15 PM. From 7:00-7:30 PM, a short parent orientation is scheduled in the auditorium. On Friday, August 10, 2018, the Pride of West Marching Band Camp will host a Community Performance at 6:30 PM at the new Trojan Field or the front parking lot.

As you can see, we have many exciting events coming up over the next two weeks. My hope is that you will come out to support our amazing students and staff members. We are truly blessed in West to have so many fabulous reasons to showcase our students, staff, campuses, and work. I believe the 2018-2019 school year is going to be the greatest in the history of West. Are you ready to "Siege the Day"? Adventure awaits in 2018-2019! Arrrrrrgh you glad you're a West Trojan?!