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*To inspire each student to  
extraordinary achievement  
every day*

Oct. 20, 2023

To Staff and the Twin Rivers School Community,

My daughter, who is in her first semester of college, was recently home visiting family and friends. It was wonderful to see her and great to hear about school, her new friendships, life on campus and, of course, her classes. Some she loves, others she tolerates.

She told me that she had to spend some of her time home studying for an upcoming math test. Even though I have been in education for nearly three decades, my mindset was less that of a teacher and more that of a parent. Like all parents, I want to see my daughter do well, so I asked some questions about her test preparation. "Do you know what will be on the test?" "Did the teacher provide the class with a study guide?" Essentially, I wanted her to consider this fundamental theme, "What does the teacher expect you to know, and do you know it?"

My daughter politely indulged her father's questions, knowing that I was coming from a place of interest and support. She expressed frustration that she had to spend any of her time studying for a math test when she simply wanted to enjoy her visit home. Frankly, I understood her urge to drop the books and head out the door to see friends, so I was immensely proud to see her find a balance between her social life and responsibilities. Balance is an important life lesson.

I shared with her that if she wants to do well in school, then she should understand that tests are equally important for the teacher as they are for the student.

Consider that all teachers are trying to impart information, skills and knowledge to their students. Whether in a cooking class, karate, piano lessons, photography, math, English literature or a foreign language, all great teachers ask themselves, "What do I want the students to learn and how do I know they are learning it?"

Assessments are not the culmination of a lesson; they are part of teaching. They provide both the student and teacher with the information that guides continued instruction and learning.

I recall early in my teaching career a time when I was grading tests, and I was incredibly disappointed in my students' work. It was clear that they did not understand some of the fundamental lessons that I was teaching in an algebra class, and now I wondered how I could move on to the next lesson that I was required to cover in the class. I turned to a veteran teacher, someone greatly respected by colleagues and students alike, for some advice. I thought he would give me some tips to motivate the students. He did not!

With a calm confidence and non-judgmental tone, he said, “Student learning is a shared responsibility between you and your students. What are you doing in class to make sure that they are learning?” We spoke about how every day provides an opportunity for me to quick-check for understanding and that these quick assessments provide me, the teacher, with the information I need to adjust my lessons and practices.

He changed my mindset on tests. They are not just a measure for the student, they are a tool for me, the teacher.

In a brief conversation with my young adult daughter, I was reminded that teaching and learning can be an intricate process for both the teacher and student. Instruction is followed by assessment to see if the student understands, and if not, the teacher can adjust the lesson to help the student succeed. I stressed to my daughter that it is her responsibility to make sure that she knows what the teacher wants her to learn, and to speak up if she needs help.

I also shared that while preparing for and taking tests may feel like drudgery and impose on her personal time, she must remember that the teacher is trying to gather invaluable information to help them be even more successful in their work and my daughter’s learning.

We are all eager to hear how she did on her first college math test.

I encourage all parents throughout the district to review their child’s performance on tests. Whether it be Swun Unit tests, i-Ready diagnostics, or benchmark exams, this performance provides valuable feedback on how students are performing. Teachers, students, and parents partnering together to review this information supports all students in maximizing their potential in every course and classroom.

#### **Around TR!**

- This morning, we celebrated the new Woodridge Universal Transitional Kindergarten (UTK) facility with a special ribbon cutting ceremony. The facility has two new classrooms and an outdoor play area for some of our youngest learners.
- Twin Rivers Adult School will host a Workforce Prep Boot Camp for job applicants interested in working for Twin Rivers Unified School District. It’s Saturday, Oct. 21 from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. at Twin Rivers Adult School, 5703 Skvarla Ave., McClellan Park. [Click here for the flyer.](#)
- Oct. 23 – 27 is Red Ribbon Week. Our schools have planned a variety of activities for students throughout the week. Red Ribbon Week highlights the importance of living a drug-free life.
- On Oct. 26, I hope you’re able to join us at the Twin Rivers District Office for our first [Twin Rivers Sacramento Poetry Day Showcase](#). Local poets will perform live and ribbons will be awarded to students who bring a poem to share. The event begins at 4 p.m. in Bay D, 5039 Dudley Blvd., McClellan Park.

With warm regards,



Steve Martinez, Ed.D.  
Superintendent, Twin Rivers Unified