

Education is the art of igniting a fire in kids

By Corrine Folmer, Ed.D.
Superintendent

DID you know that great educators ignite passion, some would say a fire? Yes, there is a lot of science that goes into the education of our students, but a critical and sometimes overlooked element of educating is the art of igniting in our students a desire to learn and the ensuing fire of excitement and self-confidence when they discover what they CAN achieve.



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To illustrate my point, I would like to share a story with you about Naksh. Naksh is a fifth-grade student I met during a recent visit to Pinedale Elementary, and he was on fire about what he had learned while participating in the science fair (where he received a Special Recognition Award).

His eyes were bright with excitement, and he was practically jumping with enthusiasm as he earnestly explained the intricacies of his project and how he had built a vacuum using, among other household items, the barrel of an ink pen, a plastic bottle and a battery.

I learned that it was not just any battery, Naksh explained with seriousness, but a 12-volt battery that would provide the necessary power to create a vacuum strong enough to pick up small pebbles. At the time of his illustration to me, Naksh had to use a 9-volt battery and he was quick to explain in scientific terms why that

was not ideal for his demonstration because it diminished the power of his vacuum.

Not only was I impressed that he knew his experiment would work best with a more powerful battery, but also that Naksh had experienced a challenge (a less powerful vacuum than he was at-

tempting to create) and had persevered to find a solution. That resiliency is another valuable life-long skill that our educators help our students learn.

In this energetic exchange with Naksh, I was reminded what happens when a student connects classroom learning with the prac-

tical world around us, and why I know with certainty that one of our best tools to build students' confidence and self-esteem is academic success. Naksh knew what he was talking about, was eager to share that knowledge with an adult visitor to his classroom and could not wait to learn more. My inter-

action with Naksh was an expression of the "fire" that had been lit inside him by the experience of discovery and learning; and he wanted more. Once ignited, this fire seeks out new ways to learn and grow which usually leads our students, like Naksh, to develop into even more inquisitive and curious learners for the rest of their lives.

Naksh impressed me, and then I met his science fair coordinator, Veronica Vela, and saw the source of the flame. As soon as Ms. Vela learned I had talked to Naksh about his project, she lit up, too. "Did you see how he used a sock as a filter?!" she exclaimed as she pointed out other small details of the project. She was as excited as Naksh was, and her enthusiasm and energy about the science, technology, engineering and math (or STEM) skills it demonstrated were contagious. What she saw as exciting, she conveys to her students, opening their eyes to why the acquisition of learning really is a thrill not a chore.

My interactions with Ms. Vela and Naksh were brief but they were a great reminder of what our educational team is doing every single day for kids.

Our amazing Clovis Unified educators create light bulb moments daily across this district for our students.

Our educational team helps our students to persevere through difficulties, they model and foster resiliency, and lay the foundation for layers upon layers of academic growth that happens from the time our students walk through the doors of transitional kindergarten to the time they cross one of our graduation stages. I am proud and grateful for our educational team who ignite fires for learning, which will continue to burn and inspire our students into the future.

LESSONS

Inspirations by, for and from our CUSD students



Joey Elswick/CUSD Today

More than 500 students recently attended Clovis Unified's Middle School African American Student Success Conference. The group African Drumming Interactive set the tempo to start the energetic day by getting students and staff on their feet (and some, pictured above, on stage!) to learn traditional African dances.

"A good laugh makes us better friends with ourselves and everybody around us."

DR. ORISON SWETT MARDEN, 19TH CENTURY AMERICAN AUTHOR