



December 20, 2016



On the morning of Friday, December 16, Givins/Shaw had the pleasure of hosting a visit from our Superintendent, Mike Gallagher, and the Director of the TDSB, Dr. John Malloy. Of course, much like anyone who will be having friends and family over to their homes in the coming weeks, you always want people to see your place at its best. The students, staff, and community all worked collaboratively to ensure that Mr. Gallagher and Dr. Malloy would see all that our school has to offer during their scheduled 45 minute visit (which ended up lasting almost two hours).

Perhaps the most galvanizing element of these types of occasions is that it lends itself to rich conversations and professional reflections as you make preparations for the day. As a staff we discussed the established foci of the school in areas of achievement, well-being and equity and how we could ensure that the strides we have made in these areas was evident. Students prepared questions for Director Malloy and Superintendent Gallagher and could speak concisely and thoughtfully about the work they were accomplishing in class. Thanks to the work of our school council fund-raiser, the office even had the rich aroma of over 160 pounds of White Squirrel coffee.

When our guests arrived they said hello to Suzie and then spoke with me for roughly half an hour. We talked about a variety of topics ranging from the neighbourhood, the school's technology plan, and various other elements of school improvement. The conversation was engaging and emphasized to me just how much we have accomplished together as a school community.

As we were concluding our talk and getting ready to tour the school, I summarized by saying that what I hoped they saw during their walkthrough was:

- a school that is a hub for its community
- a friendly, welcoming and safe school environment
- students engaged in high-level, challenging tasks in a classroom that supports their needs
- students who are inquisitive, confident, and proud of their accomplishments
- a staff that is dedicated to the needs of the students and increased student success
- rich displays of student work that reflects a variety of teaching, learning, and assessment styles and techniques





As the tour continued it became obvious that all these points and more were going to be emphasized as we moved from one room to the next. The hallways and classroom walls were full of examples of student work that reflected great instruction and effort. The enhancement to our class programming through the use of technology, thanks to the School Council's support of our technology plan, was clearly evident and noticeably impressed our visitors. The library, which one day earlier had been the site of the widely successful 'Twoonie Sale', was now the central location for our Forest of Reading program. The explanation by staff of how the outdoor kindergarten program lends itself seamlessly to areas of play-based student inquiry had both our guests quite intrigued by its possibilities.

Before they departed, both Mr. Gallagher and Director Malloy commented upon the great feel throughout the school and how impressed they were with the instructional quality and subsequent student engagement. We further discussed the direction of the school and where we hoped our progress would lead us for the rest of the year and onward. It was exciting to be able to share the school's vision in such a manner.



When you are at Givins/Shaw each day, you can take for granted the level of excellence on display at the school. We are used to seeing the manner in which we explore all options to support our students, families, and staff and make them all feel included in our school community. The comments and observations shared by our Superintendent and Director that day indeed highlighted how the efforts of the entire Givins/Shaw community are noticeable and leave an impression even during a brief visit.

As I approach the conclusion of my first term as Principal of Givins/Shaw I wanted to share that story with you as one snapshot of how thankful I am to be part of this school and neighbourhood. I wish you and your families all the best during the winter break and look forward to what lies ahead in 2017.

Sincerely,

Dan Taylor

Principal

One Proud Bulldog

