

September 2021

MWA Chief Executive Officer Report

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Welcome Back

Welcome back, MWA Board Members. We are so fortunate to continue to have you supporting us in, what will be, a particularly challenging year on many fronts – teaching and learning, attendance (students and staff), and adjusting to the rhythms of on-campus activities and routines after an 18-month recess.

The best way for me to describe how I am experiencing the beginning of the 2021-22 school year is “disorienting”. In my thirty-year career in education, nothing has prepared me for how the year has unfolded thus far. I can share more context around this comment during the meeting. Needless to say, certain assumptions one might hold in trying to plan and anticipate how to best engage and support for school success no longer apply.

On the other hand, there have been bright spots as well. In some cases, my expectations have been exceeded by how some staff members, students, and parents are “showing up” to start the school year.

Below, I share some key highlights followed by my goals for the year. I look forward to our dialogue.

Key Highlights to Start the Year

Students

- Students descending upon the middle school courtyard and basketball courts on the first day. Some were excited and some had a few tears (first day MWA and first day back at school in 18 months).
- A talk with two 6th grade students who shared their excitement at being back in school and some of their goals for the year. They were super-sharp and ready to start their on-campus Wave-Maker experience!
- Students getting out of their cars during arrival and saying “good morning” and “thank you” when I close the car doors for them.
- Seeing our upper school boys’ soccer team play and beat a team in our conference (College Prep). They are still coached by their inaugural coach, Coach Barry, and his son, MWA and USF alumnus, Alexis.
- Seeing students in their classrooms. I was particularly excited by the teaching and learning I witnessed in some classrooms.

Parents

- Seeing parents smile, get goodbye kisses from their kids, and an occasional “I love you” from Wave-Makers as they exit their cars during arrival.
- Having a difficult conversation with a parent about classroom expectations. The parent was open, fair, provided direct feedback, and was very supportive of me and the school while also supporting her son. She reinforced the expectation in front of me with her son, and he and I had a great restorative exchange.

Staff

- Staff stepping in to cover vacant faculty positions and daily faculty absences. In a year with so much complexity and many moving parts, some staff have been called upon to support classroom instruction so that we can continue to hold school and facilitate learning for students.
- Having a staff member volunteer to help me out with arrival duty, even though it was not his day to do it.

My Areas of Focus

This year, I am intentionally doing a few things to try to better understand and respond to the experiences of our stakeholders. These activities and priorities include:

- Helping out during arrival and walking the campus to assess what is going on until the start of 1st period
- Reserving time in my schedule to walk the campus, visit classrooms, and check in with staff. Some of the things I learned in my walk-throughs are:
 - A desire for MWA to offer performing arts and music in the upper school
 - Some upper school students trying order food deliveries for lunch (e.g. Uber Eats & Door Dash)
 - Seeing where and how our classroom expectations are being reinforced
- Hosting and asking key leaders to host open sessions to hear how things are going and also offering information (e.g. operations and IT)
- Reviewing daily data on staff completing the daily screening app questionnaire and signing in
- Meeting with leadership often to discuss staffing vacancies and efforts to mitigate the impact of them
- Reviewing and monitoring average daily attendance for students
- Reviewing and monitoring staff attendance
- Working with MWA and Making Waves Foundation leadership on developing a “scope and sequence” framework for college access education for 5th-12th grades.

Goals & Updates for 2021-22

Goal #1

Develop a core instructional approach that is consistent with the core identity of MWA’s past and provides forward-looking approaches that are responsive to more current and future teaching and learning challenges and opportunities.

Goal #2

Apply some of the recommendations of the Cal Berkeley Board Fellows in the area of further capturing and systemizing program and teaching innovation through a consistent “test and learn” approach.

Goal #3

Assess MWA programs to assess resource allocation levels for the near and medium term to support long term financial sustainability.