

# The Spartan Sentinel

*...inspiring and equipping...*

Volume 2, Issue 21

*Friday, January 17, 2014*

Team,

Good morning! Well, we've made it through our first full week of the semester. Remember, we take a day off of school on Monday to commemorate and celebrate the life of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Next week is a great opportunity to teach your kids about the sacrifices of Dr. King and the humble way in which he advocated for, and ultimately brought about change. What a great example for all of us of what it means to pursue a dream?!

With the NFL playoffs in full swing, I was reminded of a famous Superbowl. On January 12, 1969, the New York Jets defeated the Baltimore Colts 16-7 in Superbowl 3. This was the first Superbowl victory for the underdog American Football League (AFL). What makes this Superbowl special, besides the fact that it was a great game where the heavy favorite was upset, was "The Guarantee."

Despite the fact that the Jets were a significant underdog in this game, their quarterback, Joe Namath, famously told reporters at the Miami Touchdown Club, "*We're gonna win the game, I guarantee it.*" Joe's bold statement was provoked by a rowdy Colts fan, and the fact that he was supposedly slightly inebriated at the time! In any case, the Jets, who were 18 point underdogs, went on to win the game and find their place in NFL lore behind the confidence of their fearless leader.

So, what can we learn from "Broadway Joe" Namath? Well, I find it very interesting that *when one studies successful teams, athletes, generals, businesses, and yes, even schools, there is an underlining confidence and belief in victory that you don't see in your average organization.* Just like with Joe Namath, this confidence is almost arrogant and unrealistic but it highlights the fact that *winning teams typically possess a winning mindset.* They fully believe that they're going to win, and the prospect of a loss seems almost silly or impossible. It really is a unique phenomenon.

I read a book once called *Unthinkable* in which the author studied who survives disasters and why. This same mindset was also found in many of the disaster survivors. They

believed they were going to live and many times, that mindset was responsible for miraculous survivor stories. It is what sets the survivors apart from the victims.

So what's the point of all this? When I started here at Jefferson, I remember meeting with Denny to learn from him. We still meet from time to time and I always take away so much from our conversations. I remember in one of those first conversations after learning that Jefferson had earned an A the last year he was here asking him, "What did you guys do to take Jefferson from a D to an A?" His answer surprised me. *He told me that you all changed the mindset.* He talked about how you all started helping student believe that they could be excellent! Words like "Spartan scholars" started emerging and the ISTEP test was no longer looked at as something bad that had to happen, but rather an opportunity to show off. It really was an incredible conversation. I had never thought of things like that before. The number one thing that Denny cited for the success of Jefferson that year was this confident mindset, much like Broadway Joe's, *were students and staff believed that they were great and performed like it.*

In looking into this there's actually some research to back this up. *It got me to thinking about how, or really if, we're continuing to perpetuate this mindset?* We've been an A two years in a row now, and this is actually a dangerous time for us. When teams begin to experience success what we often see is a lessening of urgency. They begin to coast. And it's at that time that the steps that were taken to bring about the success in the first place begin to fall away. Throw in staff turnover (like a new principal) and an A can go right back to a D very quickly.

*They key is to continually assess and evaluate what we're doing, maintain the things that are working, improve the things that aren't, re-evaluate, and do it all over again.* It's really very similar to the Collaborative Team cycle your PLC's use. Why does this have to be done constantly? Well, change is the only constant! The things that worked two years ago may not work this year. We have new kids, new staff, and new standards! We've got to constantly adjust. *However, the one thing that we MUST keep the same is giving our kids that sense of confidence.* We must instill in them that belief that they have what it takes to "cut it." That underlying, almost irresponsibly confident belief that "We're gonna win, I guarantee it."

So as you work with your kids this semester, remember that *this confidence comes from the way you interact with your students.* Little things like referring to your students as scholars, or geniuses, help...when done authentically, develops confidence. Celebrating the wins, *no matter how small,* develops confidence. Staying positive and helping students know that you're not giving up on them help, develops confidence. Together, we exude confidence and class, and in the end, we fulfill our own prophecy about ourselves. We win!

