

# The Spartan Sentinel

*...inspiring and equipping...*

Volume 2, Issue 27

*Friday, March 7, 2014*

Good morning! I hope it's been a good week for you. It certainly is nice to start getting outside for recess again! I want to take a quick moment to thank everyone for all your hard work this week as we get ready for testing on Monday. You all have worked hard preparing students, planning our pep rally, or just encouraging other classes. *I do appreciate all of your hard work.*

As you know the Read 14 in 14 Challenge is going on here in Warsaw Community Schools. Once again, I've made a mistake I commonly make which is to start several books all at once. It's tough because I'm so interested in the content of each one that I can't seem to get focused. Currently I'm partially through *The Invisible Thread*, *The Secret Solution*, *Choice Words*, *Every Student Every Day*, and *Resolution*...I think that's it. Anyway, my goal is to focus and finish one this weekend, although that may be tough since we will make our final preparations to move this weekend. If you hadn't heard, my family and I are moving to a house south of town with a little bit of property. We're excited about it, but it's made this busy time of the year even busier!

Anyway, one of the books I'm reading is *Choice Words* by Peter H. Johnston. The subtitle of the book is "How Our Language Affects Children's Learning." Last week at our staff meeting we watched a short video from Carol Dweck on the power of the word "yet." Throughout the week I've been reflecting on the true power of our words with our students. Take a minute to read this passage from Johnston's book:

"...I documented three differences in the way teachers interacted with more and less successful readers. They interrupted successful readers less often and waited longer for them to figure words out, and their comments to them focused on making sense rather than on the details of print, on sustaining their efforts rather than on correcting them. They said, 'Does this make sense?', 'Does that sound right?', and 'Let's try that again,' rather than, 'Sound it out.' All their comments to more successful readers suggested that reading was about making sense."

What Johnston finds in his book is that *the way we interact with successful students and less successful students is different*. This makes sense, right? If I'm a doctor I'm going to deal with a patient with a sore throat different than one with a broken leg. However, as I reflected on this more, I realized that the doctor analogy isn't a perfect one. *In education we have the power to heal through our interaction with our "patients."* Doctors treat us and we get better, but it's usually through indirect measures like prescription drugs or surgery. As educators, our very interaction with our students either makes them better or makes them worse. *Our words matter! Even the small ones!*

So the question is; do our words or even our pauses perpetuate success or failure in a student? True, if a student is a less successful reader we need to address their current needs, but if we never begin to interact with them in a way that suggests they are successful, they may never get there.

I believe this concept applies to all areas of our lives, not just reading. It's true in how we interact with students who generally behave well and those who generally do not. It applies to those who feel safe at school and those who do not. My challenge for us going forward is to be more aware of our words, both big and small, and make the choice to build up and encourage rather than tear down, even when it's not intentional. Anyway, I'm not finished with the book yet, but when I am, if you'd like to borrow it I'd be happy to let you. Have a great Friday!

Dave