



THE FRIDAY REPORT

Friday, March 27, 2015

“Teach Like a Pirate” was the title of this year’s Teaching Excellence Lecture Series (TELS). It seems fitting that a community consumed by Gasparilla celebrations each year would find the lecture interesting. An audience of almost 350 teachers gathered at Jefferson High School Auditorium to hear Dave Burgess give a presentation on what it means to actually teach like a pirate. His bestselling book by the same name is a refreshing call for teachers to rethink their teaching and presentation strategies to make learning for students engaging and downright enjoyable.

Dave hails from the San Diego area where he has been a school teacher for 20 years. His high school history classes have become legendary for their impact on student participation and learning. Students each year try their best to be placed in his classes due to the creative way Dave makes the content come alive. There are even stories of students coming back to attend some of his more famous classes on events in history such as the 1969 moon landing.

Thursday’s presentation by Dave had everyone’s attention as he modeled the way he catches his students’ attention by creating suspense, anticipation and engagement in the subject under



consideration. Dressed like a pirate, Dave moved and sometimes ran about the auditorium to forcefully make his point in an exuberant almost comical manner. It is easy to see why his students love his classes and can’t wait to see what he will do next to bring alive the subject matter.

The Teaching Excellence Lecture Series is now in its third year. These lectures are created by teachers for teachers. The Lecture Series Committee is comprised mostly of active school district teachers. They select the speaker. Dave Burgess follows noted authors Paul Tough and Richard Gerver the previous years’ speakers. There is a tradition that the speaker has dinner with the Committee teachers the night before the lecture. Dave turned out to be very gracious and engaging to all who attended. We found out he is a professional comedy magician, as well as a school teacher. At our dinner with him at the Columbia Restaurant, he performed the most amazing card trick I have ever seen. I was sitting right next to him and still could not figure out how he did it.

The next day at the TELS luncheon for the lecture series sponsors and key supporters of public education, he performed a numbers trick that was also phenomenal. All of this slight of hand or trickery was to model a methodology to tweak student interest and engage them in the subject that the teacher is trying to teach the class. Dave places stress on creativity and presentation timing to maximize student engagement. “Hooks” is



how he describes teaching strategies which grab the students’ interest.

Dave’s lecture on Thursday night helped every teacher in the audience to understand their special role in turning an ordinary class into one that is extraordinary. Dave calls these special classes ones which have “life changing lessons.” This extra effort can make all the difference in

the world for student engagement in school. It helps to stimulate the students to comprehend more completely the subject matter they are being taught.

Special thanks to our Presenting Sponsor, Bank of America, and all our other sponsors. Also thank you to our TELS Committee, headed by Amy Gabriel. And finally, thank you’s to Heather Palmer, on our HEF staff, who coordinated the event and all our staff and volunteers who made this event possible.

All the Best,

Phil