5th Grade Promotion Speech for the Tularcitos Promoting Class of 2019

On Mondays you hear me read a book over the intercom. As you know, every story I choose has a moral or life lesson I want you to learn. What I want all of you to realize as you leave Tularcitos is that every day you are a character in your own story. Your setting is wherever you are. Your plot is whatever life has for you at that moment. But what the story is about and the lessons people can take from your story are completely up to you. At the end of every day, no matter how good or bad the day is, someone will be able to tell a story about a conversation or interaction they had with you, or a story about something they saw you do when you didn’t even know they were watching. And my hope is that, as you leave Tular, those stories people tell will be ones about how you make other people’s lives and your community better.

A lot of people think that life is about getting ahead, being the first in line, being the best at a sport, getting the best grades, being the most popular, having the latest phone or clothes, earning more money, or making life as easy as possible for themselves. People think that if they accomplish those things they will feel successful and happy. Unfortunately, it isn’t until after they accomplish those things that people realize that those things never brought the fulfillment they were searching for.

There is an old saying, “the greatest things in life are free.” This, however, couldn’t be further from the truth. If everyone stops to think about the things that mean the most to them, we realize that the truth is, “the greatest things in life are the most costly.” And for your life to be the greatest it can be, it is going to cost you; it will cost you your time, money, effort, comfort, and at times, what others might think of you. You need to remember that, to enjoy and get the most out of life and each day, your life needs to not be about you. Your life really needs to be about making a positive impact on the people around you. It is focusing on others that brings about happiness.

And as you get older you will find that making that positive impact for others will get harder and require you to sacrifice even more. But the more you sacrifice, the greater the reward will be. Unfortunately, along the way, people will say things that will really hurt, and you will be tempted to say something even more hurtful back. You will find yourself wanting to get involved in the gossip or drama and spread rumors either intentionally or unintentionally. In the next few years, you may even find yourself saying some mean things to your parents. I hope that when you are tempted to say those things you bite your tongue and make sure that when people tell the story later, they will comment on how kind you were to them even when they didn’t deserve it.

Every Monday morning you hear me ask you the question, “What are you going to do today to make the day better for someone else?” Chances are you will rarely ever hear that question asked of you again. But it is a question that I hope you will not stop asking yourself all throughout your life.

A lot of things will change in middle school, and then in high school, in college, and adulthood. As you go through these stages, my hope for you is that every stage of life gets even better than the one before it. The only way that will happen, however, is if you live your life trying to leave a positive impact on those around you. I hope you take with you the lessons you learned from the service projects you’ve done here, the class meetings you have been a part of, the character assemblies and lessons, the scholarly attributes, and the character studies from your book clubs or history lessons. Everything we have taught you in those lessons is very intentional. Like you have heard me say many times, the academics you learn here is important, but who you are and how you treat people is much more important.

Very few people go on to actually change the world, but every one of you can make a world of difference for someone else around you, whether a friend or a complete stranger, whether a small act of kindness or big. Each of you has a gift to share, a passion to pursue, and a difference you can make. And know that you won’t be able to do any of that in life without slowing down and living life intentionally. There are way too many things out there trying to distract you, grab your attention, or tell you the wrong thing is important. So take the time to slow down and notice the people and things around you. Notice the trash on the floor of your classroom and throw it away. Notice the people you walk by in the halls and say hi or smile. Notice the checker at the store, or the name of your server in a restaurant or the barista making your coffee and thank them by name. Notice when your parents or sibling needs help at home and help. Take the time to slow down and notice, and have the courage to take even the smallest of actions. As Naeem Callaway, CEO of Get Out of the Box, said, “Sometimes the smallest step in the right direction ends up being the biggest step of your life.”

I want to implore you to keep trying to do what is right and become better people. Keep serving others. Keep learning. Keep working hard. Keep filling buckets. And take the extra time to make the day better for someone else. Because if you do, you will have a wonderful time in Middle School and beyond, you will have that positive impact, your life will be more meaningful and fulfilling, and when people tell your story it will have a great life lesson.

Ryan Peterson

Tularcitos Elementary School Principal