

JENNIFER CONNELLAN : FUTURE FOCUSED

A Guest Principal - And Columnist

(This is a special edition of the School column written by Mark Campaigne. Mark is a long-time supporter of education in San Juan Capistrano, serving as Headmaster for St. Margaret's School for seventeen years. He and Jennifer Connellan work together on the Education Committee of the SJC



at the school.

A special treat for me was entering a class being taught by a former student and classmate of my daughter Sarah at St. Margaret's School, **Harmony Larsen**.

Harmony is a long term substitute teacher who is extremely committed to education as her career

path and is being well mentored at Kinoshita. In fact, I was thoroughly impressed by the collegiality and mutual support among all of the teachers at this school. Meg and Shannon clearly lead by example, and their emphasis on teamwork is paying strong dividends.

At the conclusion of this special day, all 53 of us met with the real Principals in a reception hosted by interim Superintendent **Chuck McCully** at the CUSD Board Room. (As you have likely read or heard Chuck McCully will remain on for a few months as the District prepares for **Dennis Smith** to take over the reins of the at the end of this school year. By all accounts Mr. McCully has done an extraordinary job in his seven months here and is to be thanked and congratulated!) Each of the "Principals For A Day" were offered the opportunity to make a few comments, and it became readily apparent that my positive experience was shared by all. Of course I was at the "best" school, but I'm sure that was just the luck of the draw.

Finally, this day encouraged me in my role as Chairman of the Education Committee of the Chamber to continue to work to strengthen the bonds between the private and public schools in San Juan Capistrano. I have worked at St. Margaret's, and consulted with both Capistrano Valley Christian and Saddleback Valley Christian Schools (where I currently serve) and am well aware that our children are being very well educated and cared for whether in

the public or private arenas. It has been my experience that a strong public school system makes the private schools better and vice versa. We all have our unique missions and can learn a great deal from one another. The beneficiaries of this collaboration will always be the children ...the reason we all serve in education.

Kinoshita Elementary has a unique leadership structure as **Meg Ervais** and **Shannon Cheatley** share the leadership equally. I spent my four hours at the school with Meg who gave generously of her time. Kinoshita presents unique challenges in this district as over 90 percent of the students are learning English as their second language, although you would not necessarily know this as you toured the campus.

All instruction was in English, whether in "Mainstream English" or "Structured English Immersion" groups, and not at all watered down. Vocabulary words were appropriately difficult, the reading material (Open Court Publishing Co.) interesting and inspiring, the history lessons building a firm foundation for responsible citizenship and the math problems challenging, yet still on a level that built confidence.

What stuck me the most positively about this school was the myriad ways that they met the students' needs, whether for remediation, acceleration, mainstream group work, and even special education. Not only were the teachers adept at using small groups as well as individual instruction, but community volunteers could be spotted helping with both remediation and acceleration. Two of the volunteers I spoke with were the school's namesake **Shig Kinoshita** and his wife **Mieko**, both of who regularly volunteer



MARK CAMPAIGNE TAKES TIME OUT FROM HIS "PRINCIPAL FOR A DAY" DUTIES WITH KINOSHITA STUDENTS AND PRINCIPAL MEG ERVAIS.

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JENNIFER CONNELLAN IS THE CO-FOUNDER AND PRESIDENT OF FUTURE FOCUSED, WHICH HAS OFFERED HIGHLY EFFECTIVE LIFE COACHING AND TUTORING SERVICES FOR TEENAGERS SINCE 2003. SHE HAS TWO MASTER'S DEGREES IN PSYCHOLOGY AND YEARS OF EXPERIENCE DEALING WITH ADOLESCENT ISSUES. REACH HER BY EMAILING JENNIFER@FUTUREFOCUSED.COM

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