



## Personal Reflections

10/24/2014

### Personal Reflection

As I write my third Personal Reflection as President of IMSA, I am mindful of how privileged I am to serve as your president. Last week, I attended the LULAC (League of United Latina American Citizens) Banquet and Scholarship Dinner in Aurora. An administrator from a school district said to me, "Some of us [other administrators who know of my move from the superintendence of School District U-46 to the presidency of IMSA] wonder why you would go to IMSA." I replied, "You just don't understand. IMSA exists to 'ignite and nurture creative, ethical, scientific minds that ' advance the human condition.' We are going to change the world to improve it for humanity," I said. And today, when I spoke to a group of 7th and 8th graders from Evanston here for an IMSA FUSION field trip and told them about our mission, you could see their eyes light up when I emphasized, with the help of the three IMSA seniors in the room, "... advance the human condition! " It's such a privilege to be in this mission together.

Since my last message to you, I have continued to meet with individuals and groups to listen to them and seek their advice about how to strengthen IMSA. I've met with a number of legislators, several of whom have visited, toured and met IMSA students. I attended the IMSA Fund Board of Directors meeting in Chicago last week and on Saturday met with the IMSA Alumni Association Cabinet. I've also met with other alumni, including the new Chief Operating Officer of Fermilab, and I have plans for visiting with alumni in Boston and Urbana-Champaign this fall.

I continue to visit classrooms. In fact, I asked the members of my Senior Leadership Team to visit at least four classrooms focusing on what students were doing. They found our faculty and students to be welcoming and many examples of highly engaged, collaborative learning; each team member said the visitations were very worthwhile. Thank you all.

One more thing: I was recently asked what I mean by "equity and excellence" in the sentences "We can't have equity without excellence. We can't have excellence without equity." By equity, I mean that we must provide STEM-talented students, especially underrepresented ones in our state, access to the IMSA privilege. What do I mean by this? I mean that students in Pulaski and Union, in Henderson and Warren, in Jo Daviess and Carroll Counties, as well as students who are Black and Latino, must be afforded the opportunity to learn about the IMSA option, to apply and be considered for admission, and then to enroll and thrive here. This starts with identification and recruitment. How will they come to IMSA if they haven't heard of IMSA? How will they hear about IMSA if someone doesn't tell them about IMSA? How will someone tell them about IMSA unless we and our volunteer champions are out there looking for them and building relationships with them? And so equity means that we must be intentional in our recruitment, enrollment and retention of talented underrepresented students as I describe them here. By excellence, I mean "insanely great," which is how Steve Jobs introduced the

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groundbreaking Macintosh computer at Apple's shareholder meeting in 1984. Apple and IMSA stand for excellence.

In summary, we cannot bring underrepresented students to experience the IMSA privilege without also being insanely great. We cannot be insanely great without bringing underrepresented students to IMSA. I ask you to join me in this journey of equity and excellence.

Sincerely,

José M. Torres



P.S. I'm proud to introduce my grandson to you; here's a picture of my 4-year old. His name is Malachi and he lives with his mom, my daughter, in Maryland.